The New Coterie

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& ART

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EDITORIAL.

HOW far do press notices affect sales? We mention what is perhaps the most baffling of literary enigmas, only to remark that if the sales of THE NEW COTERIE depended even in the slightest degree upon press notices, we should not be writing these lines. About one hundred copies of the first number of THE NEW COTERIE were distributed to the press. The number of notices (we use this word as liberally as possible) was four. This statement, let us add, is purely statistical. We are not complaining, but recording. And if there is any moral to be drawn from the proportion between four and one hundred, our readers will probably be able to discover it for themselves.

* * *

There can be no doubt, we think, that the subject of press notices is one upon which our views must necessarily be quite impartial, and we therefore cannot be accused of prejudice if we suggest that the present general standard of them is deplorably low. But the London papers still include among their contributors a handful of men who write conspicuously better than the average pork-butcher's manager, let us say. Thus, Mr. P. C. Kennedy, of *The New Statesman*, is one of the very few reviewers who is also a critic. Mr. Kennedy on contemporary novels is always worth reading and sometimes worth copying. For example, we would draw the attention of our readers (and more especially of our prospective contributors) to Mr. Kennedy's article which appeared on March 6th last. He is reviewing (and criticising) a novel by a young writer, and by means of well-chosen examples he shows that the young writer, as he plainly puts it, "does not know how to write." Mr. Kennedy then pursues his argument as follows:

"I . . . can draw elephants. Heaven knows, I claim no natural talent, still less any acquired technique. When I say I can draw elephants, I mean you would know—anyway, you would probably know—that they were meant to be elephants. But the point is that I don't exhibit them. (I admit I have seen shows where they might have toed the line and excited no adverse remark.) The ability to draw crudely and approximately what one means is as widespread as the ability to express it crudely and approximately in the written word. . . . It is, however, only in writing that the disregard of technique is taken for granted. I continue to be astonished."

So do we.

* * *

For if we intended to compile an anthology of the worst contemporary English prose, where should we find the most flagrant specimens? Well, in *The Observer* of April 11th, Mr. Gerald Gould, reviewing the work of a young novelist, selected the following passage for criticism:

"The long thin street of mean depressing houses was gloomy and grim to behold. Behind the tottering walls tragedies that can only happen in human life were being enacted, yet people still passed along the pavement outside, and every dawn brought its accompanying twilight."

This is Mr. Gould's comment:

"Why 'to behold'? Could the street be gloomy to anything else? 'Tragedies that can only happen in human life' is bad grammar and doubtful sense; and what on earth are dawns expected to bring? It is perhaps, too, a little late to talk of a girl giving 'vent to her pent-up feelings,' when you mean that she cried, or of a mother 'preparing the children for their youthful slumbers' when you mean that she put them to bed. . . ."

Just so. And we are duly gratified to note that Mr. Gould, like Mr. Kennedy, takes his duties as a reviewer seriously enough to tell young authors why their prose style is faulty. But we suggest that there are certain older authors among the Sabbath colleagues of Mr. Gould whose weekly signed articles are nearly everything that good prose ought not to be. And, as we were saying, if we intended to compile an anthology of the worst contemporary English prose,—but here we will take refuge behind Mr. Sassoon's most effective line of poetry: Enough enough enough enough enough!

And yet, not quite. We have been discussing reviews, and our argument would be incomplete without the following instructive quotation :

> " The worthless young woman who, as it is now mildly called, commits indiscretions from mere vapidness of mind, seems to be getting a trifle too much attention from some novelists at the present moment. Lindy in this story is the latest recruit to the ranks of spineless, mindless heroines, and her history is a mere sticky dribble. She is supposed to resemble a bowl of whipped cream, the pretty fancy of one of her admirers. Thin whipped cream at that, we should say, with a sickly amount of vanilla flavouring.
>
> " She has a father, Lucius Thornhill, a husband, General Hawkins, a recalcitrant lover not at all anxious to marry her, two admirers, the Margrave of Gratz (called Tono) and the Prince Pinesco, and a dearest woman friend called Vera. The latter is half-Hungarian, because Mr. Moss has some sweet peppers left over from his last concoction, who declines an offer of marriage from a bluff young naval man ' as she has a vocation for virginity,' which she explains in pages that the publishers call daring. Unluckily these daring scenes are fast becoming standardised ; the time and texture of the kisses exchanged are also according to pattern. The plot ? Oh, yes. General Hawkins casts off Lindy because of an indiscretion. She lives in Chelsea and then abroad, with Vera, and heaps of admirers. Vera adores her, but arranges that General Hawkins shall take her back. Vera has a final kissing scene with her own adorer, who, dedicated to nothing but thoughts of her for the future, is about to go somewhere ' off the map.' She herself goes back to Hungary to be lonely, lonely, lonely . . . or words to that effect."

You may ask : In what young, revolutionary, outspoken periodical was Mr. Geoffrey Moss's " Whipped Cream " awarded this hearty snub, forming so brusque a contrast to the soft words with which mediocrity, garbage and twaddle are usually greeted by London reviewers ? And the answer is : *The Times Literary Supplement.*

* * *

In the *Mercure de France* of April 1st last, M. Henri D. Davray shows a gratifying comprehension of the aims of THE NEW COTERIE, to which he devoted a page and a half of comments. He concludes by hoping that success will compel us to appear once a month. It is a beautiful thought and we thank M. Davray for uttering it. But although London has known of at least

one monthly paper which transformed itself into a quarterly, we doubt whether the reverse process ever has been witnessed here, and we are even more doubtful whether it ever will.

* * *

In the meantime, THE NEW COTERIE continues to be a quarterly. If we mention this fact, it is chiefly because several contributors, in tones varying from meekness to sarcasm, and covering most of the intermediate cadences, have favoured us with inquiries about their manuscripts. A little easy mental arithmetic would have made it plain to them that delays can hardly be avoided in dealing with contributions to a paper which appears once every three months. Of course, we could name journals which are able to return unwanted manuscripts within two days, but they are equipped with a staff of office boys. The editors of THE NEW COTERIE, however, attend carefully to the reading of manuscripts, and therefore cannot undertake to achieve rapidity, either in their rejection or acceptance.

ANDREW BLOCK.

THE MAN IN BED.

THE Specialist had said that he must go straight to bed. This was yesterday. He was prepared to lie on his back indefinitely. Snow lies on the ground this morning and makes him think of the Corsican brothers' duel on just such a ground in just such a snow. He imagines a murderer coming out of his cell to take those few steps to the hangman's shed—hanged by the neck till he is dead. He thinks of the homeless searching about for shelter, warmth and food. His mind wanders further afield and he pictures his wife about to give birth to a child. He sees her in labour wondering if she will survive the confinement or if the child will succumb—if it will be a monstrosity. He imagines a man in the throes of torture—boiling oil—the rack—castration. Breakfast time arrives : He thinks of a Harem with beautiful scented maidens. He thinks of the night clubs with their Houris doing two-steps, blues and tangos, whiskies at 2 a.m. at 5s. a glass, real American Hooch. His mind now wanders to that woman he picked up in Charing Cross Road, so worn and fragile. He looked at her and her eyes were sore—he shrank from her—and now a blank—he asks for the papers and reads the day's news—everlasting diplomatic struggles—wars—strikes. By the way, that reminds him—his complaint must be the outcome of his wounds—why do men fight ? What do they gain ? Is there any gain ? Why did he slay his brothers ? Why that lust to kill ? And now he must pay for the injuries he had caused to somebody who had never done him any harm. All mankind are equal—why do some have most of the world's riches while others slave and starve ? A sick pain now assails his back and he rests once more. He sees his school days and the egoism of youth. Lessons—what's the use of Latin and Greek in his present life. He whose father was a retired grocer. He is meeting the first real romance of his life. She is quite pretty—what lovely formed legs, what round breasts—why does his mind notice these two extremes of a woman's physical beauty?—that girl he lived with before he met his wife—how careful he was to prevent any encumbrance affecting her. Lunch arrives—it seems only a few minutes since breakfast. How much money had he in the bank ? Was there an overdraft ? The old-time

music halls—how he had enjoyed Marie Lloyd at the Tivoli, Harry Lauder at the " Met.," or Herbert Campbell at the " Mo." He compares them with the moderns—the pictures and the wireless. Could he compare John Henry with Chaplin, or Pauline Frederick with Sybil Thorndike. Could Shaw write " St. Joan " with a sick pain in his back ? Were there actually many people in the world who could read A. S. M. Hutchinson, Michael Arlen and Gilbert Frankau ? Why did they tolerate the Hon. John Collier and Frank Emanuel and yet despise Epstein ? Did the Hon. John and Emanuel despise the Albert Memorial and the Albert Hall ? Was there actually an audience for " Faust " and " Carmen " to-day ? Why do they neglect " Jewels of the Madonna " ? Why do they hang a man ? Why do they experiment on live animals ? How many Maison Lyons and Corner Houses were going to open ? Would Selfridges ever stop rebuilding ?—Always these whys ? whos ? and whats ?— It is tea time. Will he have to stop like this for ever ? What is the matter with him ? Is it cancer ? Are there any hidden growths that are obscure ? Will he die soon or will he linger for years ? Is he mad ? Day is now drawing in. What has happened in the City to-day ? Have there been any hold-ups ? Was there a hammering on the Stock Exchange ? Were there any sensational prices given in the Sale Rooms ? Was there a first night last night ? Any celebrity dead ? Any actress lost her jewels ? Why was he never run over, or shot, or drowned ? Now he is drowsy and dozing off, his dreams take a fearsome aspect of his waking thoughts. The Corsican brother is shot by the murderer, and, outcast, is seeking shelter with a confined woman. The shock causing her to give birth to a monstrosity. He is caught and boiled in oil. The confined woman runs away and joins a harem where she becomes diseased and living with her he discovers it much to his misfortune. He joins the army and throws a Greek Lexicon at his captain, for which he is sentenced. He escapes and becomes a ballad artist, which time he becomes acquainted with Pauline Frederick, who in the character of St. Joan commands him to read " This Freedom," " The Green Hat " and " Peter Jackson," after he has recovered from this test he is ordered to attend an exhibition of paintings by the Hon. John Collier on the top of the Albert Memorial. He is sentenced to death for listening to " Carmen."

The doctor said he died of syncope.

AFTER DINNER.—MEN AND MANNERS.

AGAIN we sank into our chairs. By this time the table had assumed an air of debauchery that belied a stiff and uneasy dinner, with conversation shot to the right, to the left, in front, and occasionally (long distance) to one's hostess on the left front, with long intervals for reloading and priming.

Now, napkins and cherry stones, almonds and Moët half consumed, testified to the messiness of feeding even " politely " and without the excuse of any Petronian excesses.

The door had closed ; the last woman had fled, and immediately the reaction was symbolised by men flopping, sprawling in chairs but lately drawn up in ranks and now in the ordered disarray of soldiers standing easy. Again the port was circulated, the brandy. Rubber shares and " things about women " superseded the Cochran revue and golf within easy distance.

" Playing with a weapon of the magnitude of the Balance of Power is a dangerous pastime," said a white-haired man with refined features. " If the League propose to entertain the idea of permitting Germany to enter the League as a permanent member—Poland to counter-effect a—— " The rest was inaudible, drowned as it was by the penetrating tones of a man with apoplectic tendency and a large interest in Trinidad asphalt.

I sipped my brandy in silence, and puffed at the big cigar I had taken to give myself a little of that poise I felt was so manifestly lacking among these doyens of " things that matter." I was nervous ; exaggerating my don't-care-a-damn nonchalance I should have been pained had I been told that to an unsympathetic eye I must seem arrogant. An undistinguished man of middle-age came round to me. He was the type who spend their lives " coming round " to people whom they imagine are " out of it." He was rounded and red, dinner clothes did not suit him, and he looked better in the curves of a golf suit as when he had stood

me a drink at a club house where I had felt a certain hostility, which he too, must have sensed, and wished to correct.

" Hallo ! " he said. " Long time since I've seen you. What have you been up to ? " " I've been in the country," I replied. " Lucky man. Town's hell this weather. Damn office—wife and children Birchington—not fair on the kiddies this weather. I say ! Damn fine Moët, hey ! You remember that woman I had with me that day down at Bletchfield, you had some friends in common, well she's just been floated by a skewer king, millionaire johnnie. I'm going down to see them. Big place near S'thampton ; a yacht, and God knows what not. Damn good thing, poor Millie, not a bad fellow, interested in Louis mirrors. French period, you know, quite a collection," he babbled on. I wondered why he told me all this. I didn't know the woman and took no particular interest in the indefinite Louis mirrors ! He had by this time well progressed through a forecast of next Tuesday's racing at Lingfield, and concluding with a ribald story he left me, having done " all that a man could do."

" Anyone want to do a pumpship ? " the host enquired. I was astounded to find emerging from the mouth of one of our senior politicians, Asquithian in looks, words which I had hitherto associated with the red-faced school-boys that smell so stuffy. Was this the man who had conversed with Lord Melbourne as a boy, for whom Palmerston had augured such a brilliant future ? Was one to believe then, that Gladstone had been acquainted with such words as " bumph," of no classical standing ; had perhaps used similar words of " racy character," as his generation would say, in his more intimate moments ?

One by one they took their turn, young and old, noble and not-so-noble, continuing their conversations to the closet door, of international dispute, of legal faculty, of histrionic powers, of bawdy tales and scientific research. Then strengthened, adjusted and prepared, they marched up the stairs to the drawing-rooms which they entered looking very much like the men that had been left downstairs and who had been asked to dine.

" We thought you were never coming," said the hostess.

THE SISTERS.

BENJAMIN was the lodger. The two sisters kept house for their father, a collier, and Benjamin, a collier also, had lived with them for two years. The sisters' mother was dead. And they coveted Benjamin, who was young, fond of drink and generous with his money.

Deborah was twenty-nine and Cassie twenty-two; and although Deborah was rather superb with her big body and dark vindictive eyes, she feared the younger charms of her sister. Cassie was thin and pale; she, too, had glowing eyes, but her voice was like a saw, though her manner was lazy and languorous.

To-night again they had been quarrelling. Latterly it had seemed that Benjamin favoured Deborah, and Cassie had just pronounced some dark accusations. The men were out in their public-houses, and Deborah was putting the supper things on the table, while Cassie sat before the fire, brooding and with an appearance of indifference. But she was burning with jealous hatred.

"You keep your nasty remarks to yourself," Deborah said, her voice mocking with triumph. "There's nearly sick with jealousy you are!"

"Ho!" scoffed Cassie, "think I want him—him, a bellyful of drink, as he always is? Disgusting and piggish are his ways. A sot he is, as Mrs. Evans, number 45, said."

Deborah banged the china on the table and, her hands on her hips, her face thrust forward menacingly, she turned to her sister.

"You can call him names behind his back," she cried, "but think I don't know how you try to wheedle him when you get the chance? There's cunning you are when there's nobody but you and him in the house! I know. But cold as a rock he is with you. Ach y fi, know I do how you flaunt yourself before him like someone bad."

Cassie looked at her, her narrowed eyes like ink. She jeered calmly: "You shut up. When Benjamin has married you, then you can keep him. But you catch him first. But be quick, dear Deborah, because old and fat you are getting. And ugly, too."

"Ho, ho," shrieked Deborah, "there's jealousy! It's settled between us, you old ape."

"Liar."

"Think a collier wants a lazy slut like you for a wife?" Deborah added. "Said he has to me, a pigsty would Cassie make any home."

"A pity you are so plain," Cassie said. "Married a long time ago you would have been if it wasn't for your looks. And not short-sighted is Benjamin, I know."

Presently their father came in from the public-house. He was enormous, with a huge red nose and tiny red eyes. Beer seemed to ooze from his flesh, and when he spoke he snorted his words with difficulty. The three sat down to supper, the father reading the racing news and the sisters continuing their jeers. The lodger was usually late; after the public-house closed he would go to the house of a friend for more drink and to gamble.

The father had already gone to bed when Benjamin came in, and Cassie was preparing to retire also. He lounged into the living-room, a little tipsy, and his vague heavy eyes looked smilingly about.

"Go you off to bed, dear people," he said. "Get my own supper I will."

But Deborah said: "There now, Benjie, I will stay down to make it."

"Disgusting is this house become," remarked Cassie and went to bed.

Deborah prepared his tea with trembling hands. Then she went into the pantry and brought forth a piece of chicken she had hidden.

"Look you, Benjie bach, there's a dainty I have kept for you."

He looked at her, a little smile on his wet lips, his eyes childishly naked.

"There's good you are to me, Deborah. A nice bangle I will give to you one of these days."

Deborah sat by the fire and watched him greedily, her large nostrils extended and her nose shining with sweat. Benjamin was a short, square young man with a grubby face marked by cuts and bruises that he had received in the pit. He had ugly brutal hands, and his mouth was small and foolish.

" A fine old time you do have out," Deborah muttered enviously.

He stretched his arms voluptuously and turned from the table to face her.

" I keep myself a good boy," he answered, gazing at her slyly.

" Get away ! " she said. " There's old dogs the men are to-day ! "

He looked at her lustfully and patted his knee.

" Come here, dear one, and let's have a little cuddle."

Deborah did not move. " You want a lot," she quavered, " but never do you ask me to marry you."

" Not enough money have I got yet, Deborah fach. You wait. But come you here now and let me kiss you."

She went to him and sat on his knees. He kissed her and murmured obscenely. She repulsed his advances. He might kiss her as often as he liked, he might even unfasten her blouse and fondle her breasts. But she was cunning. She would allow him to see part of her beauty and, thus inflamed, he might be led into marriage.

" Cruel you are, Deborah," he sighed.

" There's kind and lovely I'd be if I was your wife ! " she answered.

He laughed. " Let me taste you first. Everybody wants a taste before they buy."

" Think you that a woman is a piece of cheese, then ? "

" Crafty piece of goods you are," he grinned.

He held her tightly, but Deborah would not give in. At last she drew herself away and fastened her blouse. Her face was flushed as though with wine, and her eyes had a red tinge. Benjamin looked at her cringingly.

" Cruel you are," he repeated.

" Go on ! " she cried, " respectable I am, not an old bitch of the gutters."

She went up to bed. There were three bedrooms. Cassie occupied the back room, Deborah the middle, and the two men

the front. Deborah locked her door. She heard Benjamin come up and mutter to himself as he undressed. Soon his snores were competing with those of her father. The last to sleep was Cassie, who had been brooding over a scheme that had come into her mind.

The next day the sisters were quarrelling again. Scarcely a day passed now without altercation over the lodger. And Deborah feared to leave the house when Benjamin might happen to come in. There was no trusting Cassie.

But Cassie waited her opportunity.

On Saturday nights the lodger came home later and more intoxicated than other nights. It was sometimes early morning when he came in to the sleeping house. And one Saturday night Cassie lay wide awake in her bed, waiting for the sound of the returning drunkard. Long past midnight she heard the latch of the front door click and was instantly out of bed.

Silently she passed down the stairs and followed the lodger into the dark living-room. While he was fumbling with matches she touched him with her hand and took the box away. The room was quite dark. Cassie did not utter a word.

Benjamin started, feeling her pressing body against him. Cassie put her mouth to his, that was like a piece of cold wet meat. And Benjamin's arms went round her with delight. He muttered :

" Ho, ho, Deborah darling ! Changed your mind, have you ? There's nice you are in your nightshirt ! "

Later Cassie crept back to bed, leaving him there on the floor, where he spent most the night. And she was up early the next morning, before anyone else. She smiled secretly to herself and also when Deborah came into the living-room, sullen and sinister as always. When the father came down they had breakfast together..

Cassie remarked : " Very late was Benjamin last night."

" Didn't hear him come in," said her father.

" Nor I," said Deborah shortly. " There's lazy he is ! Why doesn't he get up ? A nuisance it is to keep breakfast waiting."

" Leave the boy alone," said the father. " Sunday it is, so no matter."

After breakfast Deborah began to wash the dishes, and Cassie, swinging a pail and singing softly, ran upstairs. She went into

the front room. Benjamin lay in bed sleeping, his mouth wide open, his face blotched and hairy. Cassie shook him. His lids came unstuck slowly from his eyes, that were like gum.

" What d'you want ? " he demanded irritably when he saw her.

" Wake up," she whispered. " Talk to you I want to."

He looked at her as a bull looks, then closed his eyes.

She said sharply : " No wonder you want to sleep, after your filth last night, you old pig. Wake up and say what you are going to do about it."

His eyes opened quickly, and he looked at her with fear. He quavered : " What a loose tongue has Deborah got ! Fancy telling you ! But her fault it was—she came downstairs after my body."

" Deborah ! " she cried harshly, " it wasn't Deborah at all. Me it was. There's an old ruffian you are—taking advantage of me when I was on the way to the W.C."

He stared at her foolishly, then grinned.

" There's no joke about it," Cassie continued wrathfully. " Go on, you dirty thing, to take advantage of me like that ! Trouble I will make about it."

" Keep you silent about this business, Cassie fach," Benjamin entreated, his voice shaking with fear. " Be a good and quiet girl and I will buy you a nice little present. Say what you want."

" A gold wedding ring I want. You be honourable by me," Cassie answered, showing her teeth.

Benjamin scratched his head, and Cassie sat on the bed and began to caress him coaxingly.

" Benjie bach," she murmured, " there's a good wife I will make ! And a good time I will give you. Passionate I am."

" Ach," he cried, " your old sister is after me too ! "

" Ugly and an old witch is Deborah," Cassie said. " And suffer she will with her inside later on, the doctor says. A burden she would be on you."

Before she went from the bedroom Cassie had extracted a promise of marriage from the lodger. She went downstairs in splendour and triumph. Deborah was alone in the kitchen.

" Benjamin has said that I am to be his wife," Cassie announced in a mincing manner. " Secret arrangements had we made, but I must tell you now, Deborah, dear."

Deborah turned round quickly. Her face was the colour of

heavy dough. The water from the dish-cloth in her hands dripped on the floor.

" Liar ! " she exclaimed.

Cassie put her nose high in the air,

" Just settled it we have," she said carelessly.

Fear and suspicion struggled on Deborah's face. Then she flung the dish-cloth at her sister's elevated profile. Cassie shrieked.

" You sly snake," Deborah screamed, " sly and cunning ! "

The father came in from the back-yard and found his daughters struggling together. He went back to his pigeons. After some damage to each other the sisters separated, and Cassie ran to fetch Benjamin. She brought him down in his trousers and shirt.

" You tell her," she cried, pointing to the weeping Deborah in the corner, " tell her it's me you are marrying."

" Is it true, Benjamin ? " wept Deborah from her loosened hair.

Benjamin gazed at her like a sheep.

" It can't be helped," he muttered, turning away. " Where's my breakfast ? "

Then Deborah rose in high wrath and scorn.

" Well, get married, you goats," she cried derisively. "There's a fine bag of flesh you are going to marry, Benjamin Jenkins ! A lazy slut who won't wash her neck ! Her old combs. she wears for two months, being too lazy to wash them. Ah, the sly cat ! Dirty outside and inside. My mother always said, what a blind frog will be the man who marries Cassie ! "

" Natural it is to say evil lies when one is jealous," said Cassie calmly. And she obsequiously attended to Benjamin's breakfast.

A perilous silence brooded in the house during the next few days. Deborah maintained an attitude of scornful disgust, but her haggard eyes gazed at her sister with a murderous hatred. In the nights she cried herself to sleep.

Then, after he had had his dinner and bath the following Saturday the lodger, instead of going to the public house, went to the railway station and took a ticket to one of the colliery towns in the Midlands of England. And it was Cassie who wept, a little later.

OLD BOY AT SPEECH DAY.

MIRACULOUS, perennial, flashing stream
Of talent such as never was or shall be!
The Head—the advertising manager!—
Imposing in black silk, resounds and booms
Through the great hall the tale of routine "honours,"
Matrics., Higher Certificates, Scholarships,
Prelims. in This and That—so far the present,
Incomparable enough till he compares
The records of the past, the late alumni
Whom only three years' absence has made myths.
And they, it seems, the implacable Old Guard,
Still carry all before them—steel on steel
They clash through massed battalions of exams.,
Invincible! Fifteen within the year
Have taken B.A.'s in Classics, English, Maths.,
In Natural Sciences and Engineering,
At young and ancient universities.
Nay! one before the Royal Society
Has read a paper; three submitted theses
For D.Sc., B.Litt., and B.C.L.
In hallowed Oxford . . .
A hundred parents' hearts with tearful pride
Swell as they hear—that they have been so blest
With sons they love but cannot understand.
Now tea is done and all have gone away—
Precocious eloquents with stacks of prizes—
"Ludorum Victor," lowest in his form,
Contented to be centre of the smiles
Of all the sisters—small ambitious boys
Who swot at prep. beyond the midnight hour,
Pushed by their parents and drawn on by hope.
So moves the slow machine, sifting and grading,
Year after year, till lawyers, pedagogues,
Chemists and metallurgists crowd the earth

And the old school feels it has done good work—
Seven prizes! What a head that youth has got!—
Square in the brow and long from eye to ear—
And how he talks!—swift, flippant, gay and wise
As a late April wind—He rounds the bend
Making a concertina with his books,
And now is gone. So now to you I speak—
Precocious eloquent with your seven prizes!
I, too, in my last year secured no less—
Forgive my mentioning it! I mention it
For your good, not for mine. It adds a weight
More than my words to this comparison.
I envy, pity, love your just elation.
But I have now attained the second youth
Of proud, fierce, challenging, sombre twenty-eight!
And I must warn you. Now life seems to spread
A broad highway before you, bearing you
In flaming chariot with four gold wheels—
Your solid scholarships, I saw the list—
To some old dreaming university.
Life now has height and depth, but not yet breadth.
Flushed with success, you hail the approaching close
Of this your last term with a wild relief.
You think you have thrown off the tyranny
Of peevish middle-age for evermore.
Not yet, you think, need you select careers,
Nor yet prepare for Smiles' and Avebury's
"Battle of Life"—but rest upon your oars,
Pensive, grateful to life, perhaps in love,
But always witty, wise, chivalrous, eloquent,
Perhaps quixotic, even? And this first summer
Of unchecked liberty you'll fritter away,
Revelling in sun and sea on hill and shore,
Till your Greek accents grow a trifle shaky
And you forget your Roman history—
But still—you feel—there still is time to muse,
To feed your general interests—fatal lure!
A narrow expertise will pay you better!—
To dabble in Italian, music, art,
To read the "middles" in the weekly press,
Play tennis, talk, philosophise and dream—

Yes ! I must warn you ! For within four years
You must needs make a fatal choice for life.
Perhaps the Church ?—where you will find belief
Drowned in theology and love in creeds.
Perhaps the rich hypocrisy of the law ?
A rising barrister, you'll argue cases
You don't believe for clients you despise,
Bully poor fools who never had a chance,
Toady to rich contractors, marry well,
Enter the House, the County, and Debrett.
Reviewer to some weekly rag ?—You'll sit
Firm on the fence. You'll never say " This rot . . ."
" This pompous resonance . . ." " Hogwash for the Mob "
. . . But, tongue in cheek, and honesty in purse,
To each equivocal judgment add a phrase
Removable from context . . . " Bold technique " . . .
" Robust and rapid movement " . . . " Subtle and rare
Power of evocation." Publishers' puffs,
As you intend, will quote them, till they sell
Seventy times seventy . . . and you " make a name."
Or as a leading journalist you'll write
Rubbish for women, schoolboy politics
For men, and in your leisure hours you'll work
For editors who cannot keep their tempers
Or publishers who cannot keep accounts—
Or if you fail to please the proper clique
Of pseudocritics—when you're sixty-eight
You'll be compelled to grind out slipshod books
On " Mysteries of Royal Courts " and " Loves
Of Paris Salons," or edit dictionaries,
While those who crabbed your reputation die
With honour and are buried in St. Paul's.
A popular novelist ?—with tongue in cheek
You'll play on the emotions of the mass
Betraying Art to earn your thirty shekels.
A politician ?—you'll defend abuses,
Oppressions, exploitations, which you know
Destroy the race but keep one class alive,
Until you win a K.C.B., and dying,
Become immortal to the Primrose League.
Or you will burn your brain in rousing men

To universal justice, freedom, love—
Until you find that rich nor poor desire
Cold culture but a comfortable life.
A schoolmaster ?—the young barbarians
Year in, year out, go surging through your room
While you grow dictatorial and dull,
Learning no more because you know it all.
A university lecturer ?—poorly paid,
Losing originality in research,
Embracing platitudes and tendencies
Because they save your salary and your time.
Perhaps a " brilliant surgeon " ? You'll remove
Fetid appendices from " nouveaux riches "
Or practise rhinoplasty on young dukes.
Between your sumptuous flat in Harley Street,
Your Georgian mansion on the Surrey Hills,
And your stone lodge in Perthshire you will speed
In a Rolls-Royce. You may choose any of these.
You will " go far," you will " succeed," of course,
Precocious eloquent with your seven prizes.
But oh ! while yet there still is time, be warned !
There's but two fates, whatever you may do—
Contemptibly engrossed or nobly bored !
So while there still is time, preserve your free,
Swift, lucid, fresh, eager and brilliant mind,
Your personality, while there is time !
Throw down your books and run away to sea,
Ramble the Andes, journey to the Poles,
Ransack the seven seas, ere you be caught
By all these bonds. Better to live unknown,
And still have time to think and feel, than grow
Dogmatic, dull, successful, adipose !

"THIS LITTLE PIGGIE WENT TO MARKET."

THE old man, after he had saved a comfortable little sum, retired. He bought cheaply an ugly house with a damp basement and a cellar full of rats. His daughter Lizzie never forgave him for that dark damp basement. She imagined that he had bought the house with a vindictive purpose, he enjoyed making her uncomfortable. As a matter of fact it was the long strip of garden which had attracted him. He wanted to grow vegetables. And later, when his first tomatoes appeared he felt as if he had been born again. Often before breakfast he would take his granddaughter Rachel to inspect them.

"Isn't that a beauty?"

He smiled, showing a huge yellow tooth which clung obstinately. Rachel was always wondering why it didn't fall out.

"They're very good for yer."

Then in a low voice he got confidential. Rachel was sure that the cauliflowers and cabbages were straining every leaf to listen.

"Yer mother's getting very irritable lately."

"She's tired."

"D'ye think she smokes too much? I never did 'old with all that cigarette smokin'—it ain't nateral for a woman. I suppose you couldn't say something to 'er about it."

"It wouldn't be any good."

"No, and it's no good me saying nothin' to 'er,—she flares up at the least thing."

He raised his arms and slowly lowered them again.

"I know yer Grandma's very tryin', but she can't 'elp it—she ain't well, I tell yer."

And suddenly, as if half afraid he had been saying too much, he changed the conversation.

"'Ow are yer gettin' on at school?"

Without waiting for an answer he pointed to a cabbage.

" What's the French for that ? "

" I don't know."

" Yer don't know ! " He shook a bony finger at her. " Yer don't know ! Yer don't spend enough time on yer lessons."

Rachel said nothing. The old grandfather's words died away in an indistinct mutter.

Perhaps they could go in and have breakfast now. She knew what was going on in his heart. It always made her ready to die with shame and mortification.

" What sort of schoolin' d'ye think I 'ad ? I 'ad no-one to pay for any schoolin' for me. . . . It costs a pretty penny your schoolin' does. Why, I 'ad everything to learn when I left school. I was workin' 'ard at fourteen, just your age yer see. And I courted yer Grandma at sixteen. Gawd ! What a long time ago it seems ! "

Oh, this horrible old age ! Getting on for eighty !

He stood very still and thought for a moment. He thought about his family. He had had seven children and he had loved them all dearly. What years had passed since then.

His mind was never free from memories. Many of them were dead, but there was one. . . . Lizzie had always been his favourite child. But no sooner was she grown up than she began to display an extraordinary desire to be for ever running about the Town. And then one day she met a man who wronged her. Cruelly wronged she was !

He sent her away and long, long afterwards she came back with Rachel and a wedding ring, and a story of a husband who had deserted her,—but that was only for appearance sake. And she was quite changed. She looked after the house and grew plain and peevish, and quarrelled all day with her mother. At first people nudged each other when they saw Rachel and that made him feel uncomfortable. She was such a pretty thing, too, always laughing and happy. When he was with her he laughed and was happy too.

But there were certain things that disturbed him. He had watched the child grow. It was like watching a flower unfolding. He noticed every little change. And he didn't mind spending a bit of his savings on her. But one day he saw her take three pennies out of the Missionary box that stood on the mantelpiece. Yes, she was a sly one !

II.

The old grandmother shuffled about the kitchen.

" I'll tell yer one thing," she said. " You're nothing but a pauper 'ere ! "

Lizzie dropped the cup of rice on to the floor. She said nothing. And suddenly she remembered a wealthy stockbroker who had offered her a diamond bracelet if she would have supper with him. And he would have kept his word ! That was many years ago, though.

Now her whole life was one long humiliation. And she was nothing but a servant really, no trace of her beauty and coquetry remained. There was nothing left for her——

What did the old woman want to drink so much whisky for ? She hated her, the quarrelsome old bitch. If it weren't for Rachel——

" And who else do you think would keep this place clean," she said. " It doesn't matter what I do. It's always filthy. Work ! There's nothing but work. Why anybody ever bought a house like this is beyond me. And there's father come straight in from the garden with his dirty boots on. I'm nothing but a skivvy here. I clean up after everyone."

" Yes, that's all the gratitude we get."

" The house is a curse. God's curse ! "

" You can't be cursed enough for all your wickedness. And if you don't look out, Rachel will be a bad girl too. All the money goes on her while I go about in rags."

Rachel at that moment went into the kitchen.

" How awful it is ! " she was thinking. Nothing but rows all day long. It made her ashamed. She knew more than they thought. At night in bed she brooded on her wretched ugly life. And one of the beastliest girls at school had said : " I suppose your father ran away from your mother." From everyone she had to endure insults.

" Ah ! " said the old grandmother, " here you are. I'm feeling very poorly to-day. You ask your mother to give me a drop of whisky. She's hidden the bottle away somewhere."

" No, I won't."

The old woman puckered up her face till she looked like a witch.

" I'll tell you one thing. When I'm gorn you shan't 'ave

the pianner. That's my pianner you know—me mother left it to me."

"I don't want it."

"You're a bad girl. You mark what I say. When I'm in me grave your cousin Nellie shall 'ave that pianner."

The old grandfather, in a merry mood, peeped round the kitchen door.

"Do yer want me to get yer any more potaters? Well, mother, and 'ow are yer? I've just picked a lovely ripe tomater for yer."

Suddenly the old woman began to weep.

The old man stood over her and gently patted her on the shoulder.

"'Ave you got them rheumatics bad again? My back's bin achin' a bit too. Ought not to 'ave been out in the garden yesterday in the wet I reckon. But oo's goin' to look after the garden if I don't."

The old woman went on sobbing.

"She's been drinking too much," said Lizzie with a hiss of indignation.

"Been at the whisky bottle," said Rachel.

"Yer mustn't talk to the pore old woman like that. She ain't feelin' very well. We're gettin' old, yer know. I'm nigh on eighty, and the old woman's only a year or two be'ind. . . . There, there, don't cry, mother."

He passed his hand over her hair tenderly, while his face grew sad.

"We're both full of them rheumatics—nearly done for. We're going down'ill fast I reckon—down'ill fast.

III.

When August came Rachel felt more bored than ever. She was now fifteen and her spirits drooped. The least thing used to hurt her and she would sit for hours in the bedroom shrinking into herself. Sometimes she stood at the window, drowsy and lifeless, thinking useless, persistent thoughts, while the hot sun lighted up everything in the garden. Why was it that nothing ever happened to her? Her mother and grandmother went on quarrelling and saying the same things every day, and at night her mother often cried herself to sleep. The old grandfather dragged himself about the garden and teased her because

she didn't know the French for cucumber. And it seemed to her that this might go on for ever. She must not think of that. It sent a cold numb feeling all over her.

The time passed so slowly. She left school because she wouldn't learn her lessons, and helped her mother in the kitchen. She hated it all and she couldn't eat her dinner because of a feeling of nausea.

" Why don't you have some more of that nice rhubub ? " asked the old grandfather. " Rhubub's very good for yer."

" No, thank you."

" Everything's dyin' for the want of a bit of rain. A nice shower would do the garden a world of good."

" Why, it poured yesterday," said Lizzie.

After dinner the old grandmother went off to sleep in the armchair, her head swaying from side to side.

" Sh ! " said the old man, " she ain't well, I tell yer. She ain't well. We're both like the garden, full o' weeds."

" What nonsense you do talk ! " said Lizzie.

Rachel went with her mother to help wash up.

" Don't you hate this place ? " she asked gloomily.

For a moment her mother seemed roused from her stupor.

" For God's sake don't you start grumbling. All I want is a little peace."

" Well, it is awful."

" Why do you think I stay here ? Why do I work my fingers to the bone ? D'you think I'd have stayed a minute if it hadn't been for you ? *I* had no money to keep and educate you."

Rachel stared blankly at her and went pale. It appeared that she was to blame for everything. How degraded she felt ! And why in God's name had she ever been born ? She was of no use to anyone and certainly nobody loved her.

IV.

The Autumn came and Winter somehow went. It was Spring. Birds sat on the old cherry trees. Rachel dreamed with joy in her heart of a wide, glorious future. It would unfold itself gradually, and it would be mysterious and lovely. . . . A young man passionately desired her. . . . He was tall and slender with deep penetrating eyes. . . . He looked rather like an actor and when he smiled. . . .

There was a clatter and banging of plates in the kitchen—a smell of frying onions.

" It's time you got the table laid."

" All right, mother. I'm coming," she answered.

Of course her mother could not understand her. Whenever she tried to tell her things or to get near her she felt she ought to hide herself with shame. Grandpa was looking ill and he kept saying that he was not long for this world. And the garden got more and more neglected. She felt sorry for him and wanted to weep because she was such a disappointment. . . .

" Gawd-a-mighty ! A pretty penny your schoolin' cost ! " . . .

One evening she went out all alone. She walked up the street that led to the kinema, and when she stopped to look in a shop window she became aware that someone was standing by her side ; but he wasn't looking in the window, he was looking at her. She blushed and lowered her eyes, full of a delicious but painful uneasiness.

There weren't many people in the street. Two or three men were talking outside the public house next door to the kinema. The moon was rising.

She looked up. He was tall and middle-aged and rather ordinary looking.

He smiled at her. He was thinking that it wouldn't be bad to have an affair to help pass the time in this dull provincial town. And she was certainly young and charming . . . good legs too.

" Are you going for a walk ? " he asked. " Isn't it a marvellous night ? "

That was more or less how it began.

They walked to the end of the town where the road divided in two, one branch went straight out into the country, the other led to a residential district with sullen red brick houses.

They vanished into the darkness of a country lane.

He skilfully made her talk about herself.

" And so you haven't got any brothers or sisters ? "

" No."

" What do you do with yourself all day ? "

" I help Mother."

And suddenly he stopped and took her in his arms and kissed her.

She gasped, half frightened and half surprised.

" What a soft mouth you have ! " he whispered.

She melted and threw back her head so that the next kiss might last longer.

When she got back a crescent moon was shining over the neglected garden. . . . Everything was dying somehow. The few flowers drooped their heads. She imagined they were dying because nobody loved them.

When she went into the house they had already had supper.

" Where have you been ? " asked her mother. " You said you weren't going to be very long. Look how late it is."

" I went to see Nora Bailey and had supper with her."

" The slugs 'ave killed nigh everything," moaned the old man. " The slugs and snails between 'em."

She suddenly felt so tired. The stuffy atmosphere in the room made her yawn.

" So you've bin trapseing the streets," said the old woman.

" That will do mother, that will do. She must go and see 'er friends sometimes."

" One thing, I'm never consulted about anything," said Lizzie bitterly. " I suppose I don't count."

" Now, now, don't you get irritable over nothing," said the old man. " And really you ought not to smoke so many of them cigarettes. It ain't nateral I tell yer. It's all very well for a lot of forrin wimmen, but . . . "

" And where does all the money come from ? " interrupted the old grandmother.

" Gawd-a-mighty ! A pretty penny the gas bill is for last quarter."

Lizzie felt sure this was a personal insult.

" You know the oven won't work," she said. " It's all falling to pieces. I have to cook everything in the gas stove."

And Rachel's face was burning with the heat of the room and the memory of stolen kisses.

It would have been nice if she could have told someone what was passing in her heart. She was less terrified now at the thought that her ugly life in the damp house would go on for ever, and she didn't mind the spiteful expression on her grandmother's face.

When she was undressing to go to bed she heard the old man's voice in the next room .

" Ah ! she's a sly one, she is ! "

V.

In her hat and mackintosh she went out to take one last look at the garden. It was raining heavily. The dying garden was drenched with rain. Now that she had decided to run away from home everything seemed unreal. And try as she might there was a pang of sadness at her heart . . . " When I'm gorn, 'oo will look after the garden ? " the old man had asked at breakfast. Everything looked dying and dreary, the whole garden was plunged in gloom.

And then quite suddenly that strange incomprehensible feeling came back. She was in love ! . . . The way he raised his eyebrows when he smiled, the look in his blue eyes—it filled her with rapture.

The rain beat on the windows of the train. She remembered her mother. Sometimes she loved her quite dearly. But everyone tormented her ; they made life petty and degrading. Still she couldn't help feeling rather frightened and huddled into her corner, small, pitiful and helpless.

Edward Stimpson met her at the station and took her to a little hotel in Paddington.

In the bedroom she burst into tears.

" Come, come," he said. " What's the matter ? "

Then he embraced her and played with her fingers . . . " This little piggie went to market . . . '

How pretty she was !

" By Jove, you make me feel a scoundrel bringing you to a place like this. But what are we to do ? I must get you a couple of rooms somewhere. And you must tell me what you want, clothes and all that. I'm not a rich man and my wife takes a lot of money, still you must have two or three pounds a week pocket money. Perhaps later on . . ." (Pause.)

Rachel turned red. The painful uneasiness again took possession of her. The tears swam in her eyes and everything in the room melted in a dark blur.

" Now, now ! " He stroked her hair. " After all, you can't do without money, can you ? But—but you mustn't deceive me. I trust you somehow. I don't believe you've told me a single lie yet. I found out after that first meeting that you'd told me your right name and everything. One picks up awfully funny people sometimes."

She sobbed bitterly and he wondered if he had said anything to hurt her. She seemed to shrink under his kisses and he felt confused and did not know what to talk about. He had almost a longing to fall at her feet and to tell her that he was really ashamed. But when he tried to express himself he always made things seem different from what he meant.

"I do love you, you know," he muttered. "My wife's a good woman, but— Well, night after night I lie by her side and I never want to touch her. I don't really. And I'm not an old man. I've only just turned forty. I don't look more than that, do I? Though I know I'm getting a bit on the fat side."

It was evident that he was beginning to worry about his age. He got up and looked at himself in the glass, and he kept sighing and shaking his head. He hadn't been making as much money lately either. The trade of the country was going to the dogs! And he wanted to give Rachel a lot of rich presents. Something with diamonds. They always pleased women.

And Rachel made little sniffing noises the whole time. She kept trying to stop and to look happy, but for some reason she couldn't. And she didn't like most of the conversation being about money. It made her feel uncomfortable and as though everything was all wrong.

She started crying all over again. Oh God! why did she feel so miserable?

"Come, come! You'll be ill if you go on like this. We'll have something to eat and then we'll go out and buy you a nice dress or something. Are you hungry?"

"No—no. I don't think so."

"We'll have a few oysters. There is an R in the month. . . . Why, your eyes are getting quite red. By Jove, I am a scoundrel to have brought you to a place like this. Come and sit on my knee a minute. . . . There, that's better. . . . 'This little piggie went to market'. . ."

The old grandfather would be pottering in the garden. She saw the bright gaudy red-hot pokers, she never could remember their other name. And the tub would be brimming full of rain water.

"Oh!" She caught her breath. She struggled and for a moment seemed overcome with terror.

Then she half-shut her eyes and almost went to sleep.— "You mark my words, she's a sly one, she is"—Oh, well,

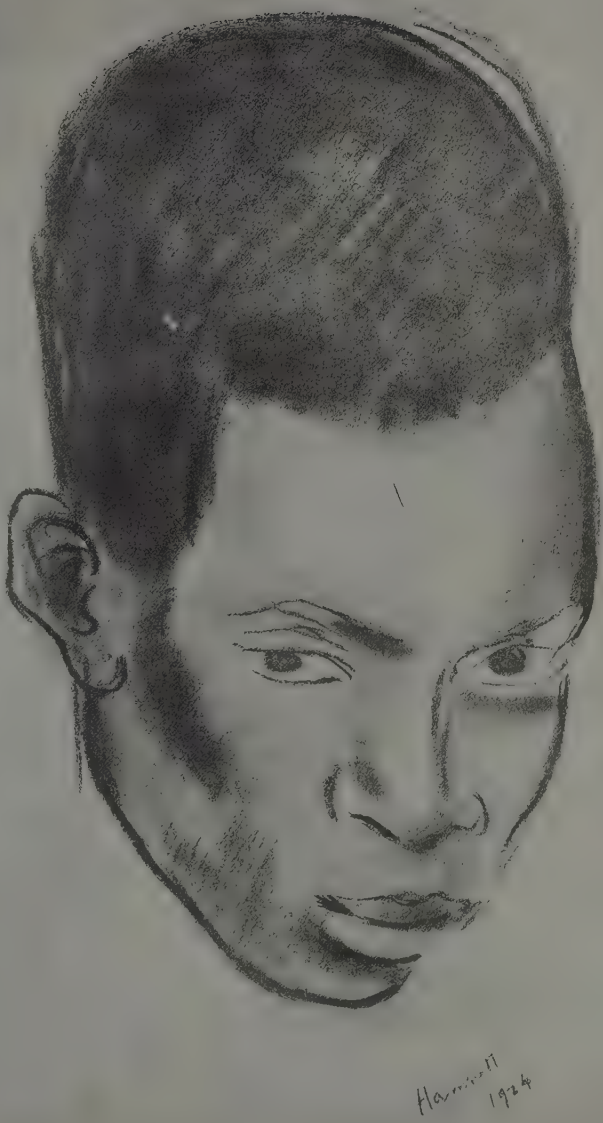
what did it matter?—"You shan't 'ave the pianner, you're nothing but a pauper 'ere!"

"By jove, you're trembling all over. You must be faint with hunger. . . . You'd better tidy yourself up a bit."

In the street the rain had stopped, but now there was a high wind blowing. It whipped her face, screamed and mocked at her

"We must get you a new coat," said Edward Stimpson pleasantly.

They stopped and looked in a shop window. My goodness, what lovely coats they were! "I shall look lovely in that dark green one," she thought—I'm only miserable because I'm tired and hungry. Oysters—Yes, Nora, we had oysters and champagne——" Ah! but would she ever see Nora again? Suddenly she caught sight of a small white face in the mirror opposite. It made a grimace at her. She could not bear that pitiful face grimacing at her. She fumbled in her bag for her handkerchief. Oh! how awful everything was!



HEAD STUDY.
By Nina Hamnett

AN ARABIAN LOVE STORY.*

(*Translated from the Arabic by J. Leveen.*)

TUFAIL, the son of Amir, the Amirite tells this tale: I went out one day on a raiding expedition alone, for I was a man ever fond of solitude. And whilst I was thus journeying I lost my way. And I travelled for days not knowing which way to turn until my provisions were exhausted. And I began to eat the grass and the leaves of the trees until I despaired of life and was on the point of perishing. And when I was in this extremity suddenly I saw a flock of sheep grazing by the wayside. And I turned in their direction, and lo! a young man of comely looks came towards me, and speaking with elegance, said: "What place art thou seeking?" And I replied: "I have desired to visit one of the villages in this region on some private business, but truly I believe I have lost my way." "Thou hast, indeed," he replied. "For between thee and thy road there is a journey of many days. I pray thee, therefore, alight and refresh thyself and give thy horse a rest." So I dismounted. And the young man threw a handful of grass to my horse and he brought me bread dipped in gravy, and milk. And he came up to a sheep and slaughtered it. And he made a fire and prepared balls of meat and he fed me until I had my fill. And when the night enfolded us he rose and spread a bed for me and said, "Come and yield thy soul to sleep and refresh thy spirit for sleep come most quickly after tiredness." So I arose and laid my head upon the couch. But when I was on the point of falling asleep, suddenly there came in a young girl—mine eyes have not seen her peer for beauty and comeliness—and she sat down by the side of the youth and each began to pour out his tale of love to the other, and I was so entranced by the beauty of their discourse that sleep fled from my eyes. And at dawn she arose and went to her dwelling.

* *Kitab al-Mahasin wa'l addad* (ed. Van. Vloten, Leyden, 1898, pp. 103–107).

And when we rose in the morning I approached the youth and said to him, " Who art thou, O man ? " He replied, " I am such a one the son of such a one " (giving me his name) and he declared his genealogy to me. Then I knew who he was, and I said : " Thy father is the chief of his people. What has brought thee to this place ? " " By God, I will tell thee," he replied. " I was deeply in love with my cousin, this woman whom thou hast seen. And she loved me. And the report of our love was spread abroad amongst the people. And I came to my uncle and asked for his permission to marry my cousin. And he said : ' My son, by God what thou hast asked of me is not overweening or sinful in my sight. But men have already uttered words concerning thee and her. And thy uncle is greatly offended by this shameful talk. Therefore, look for some other woman to be thy wife, so that thy uncle can feel he has done his duty towards thee,' " But I replied, " I care not a farthing for the reports which have been spread about us. And I urged my suit in the company of friends of my tribe, but he turned them away and married my cousin to a man of the tribe of Thakib, who was the chief of his tribe and possessed much power. And he brought her hither (and he pointed with his hand to many tents near us). And the wide world became too narrow for me when my cousin departed. And I followed in her track. And when she saw me she was filled with great joy. And I said to her, ' Tell no one what we are to each other.' Then I came to her husband and said : ' I am a man of the tribe of Azad. I have slain a man, therefore am I in hiding. And I have come to thee knowing full thy wondrous goodness. Now I have experience of flocks ; therefore, if it please thee, give me some of them, so that I shall be under thy wing and protection.' ' Thou art welcome,' he replied. And he gave me a hundred head of sheep and he said to me, ' Wander not far from the tribe.' And my cousin used to come to me at the hour when thou didst see her, and go away. And when my master saw how well the sheep fared with me he gave me this tent. And I was well content with my lot."

Said Tufail : I stayed many days with this youth. And one night he roused me from my sleep and said : " My cousin of the Beni Amir ! " and I said, " What ails thee ? " He replied : " My cousin hath delayed to come and this is not her wont. And by God, I know not what hath befallen her. Tell me,

therefore, some story to beguile the night." And I began a tale but he impatiently stopped me saying :

" What aileth Maya that she comes not as her wont ?
Hath some joy stirred her, or some business kept her away ?
My Heart can think of nought but thee,
Even unto death, nor have I hope but in thee.
If thou but knew what thy absence means to me,
No excuses could avail thee, nor pretexts save thee.
My life for thee ! Thou hast smitten me with a wound
Whose overpowering heat almost rends my limbs asunder
If but a little of this heat were upon a mountain,
The mountain would surely sink and crash to the ground.

And by God the collyrium of sleep never touched our eyelids until the columns of morning were broken. Then he rose and went towards the camp and tarried a while. And he returned bringing something with him. And he began to weep over it. And I said to him : " What is it ? " And he replied : " This is my cousin. A lion has pounced on her and devoured her. And this is what he has left of her, near our tent. And by God, my heart was filled with anguish for him." Then he stretched out his hand for his sword and set out for the camp, and he tarried but a little while ere he returned, and upon his shoulder was a lion as large as an ass. And I said to him : " Who is this ? " and he replied : " That is my friend the lion." And I asked : " How didst thou know it was he ? " He replied : " I made for the place where he attacked her and I knew he would return to devour the rest of his prey. And truly he came to this spot. Then I knew it was he. And I fell on him and I slew him." Then he rose and dug a pit in the ground, working with all his might, and after that he drew forth a new sheet and said : " O cousin of the Beni Amir, when I die wrap me with her in the same sheet ; then lay us in this grave and smooth the earth down and write these verses upon our grave :

' Upon the back of this earth we lived, and life was pleasant for us.
And fortune brings us together, and one camp, and one country.
But fortune has played the traitor to us by sundering the knots
with which we were tied.
And to-day one shroud unites us in the womb of the earth.'

And as for thee, my friend, peace be with thee."

Then he turned to the lion and said :

" Thou, lion, swaggering in the pride of thy strength !
A curse upon thee ! for thy paws have brought calamity upon us.
We were two, but thou hast left me desolate.
Thou hast shrunk the boundaries of this earth to a prison for us.
Shall I meanly cling to fate, who has played the traitor to me, by robbing me of my beloved ?
God forbid that I should ever again link myself to her ! "

Then he turned to me and said : " My brother of the Beni Amir, when thou hast finished with us, shout to the flocks and call them home and bring them back to their master." Then he came up to a tree and strangled himself. And thus he died. Then I rose and laid them both in the sheet and buried them in the grave he had made, and I wrote those verses upon their tomb and I returned the flocks to their master. And the people put questions to me and I told them the whole story. And a host of them went forth and said : " By God, we must make sacrifices for him, to do him honour." And they came and brought a hundred camels. And when the others heard the tale they joined us. And three hundred camels were slaughtered. Then we took leave of each other.

S. H. McGRADY.

THE LAST ADVENTURE OF ODYSSEUS.

FOR ten years was Odysseus of many counsels one of the leaders of the Achaians when they strove with the Trojans on the windy plains of Ilium. For Helen they fought—beautiful Helen—Helen fragrant and enchanting. White was her fluttering raiment, and in her hair were lotus flowers, and like the dawn was the fairness of her face. And when at last the city was taken, and she came forth, lovely as Aphrodite, from the burning palaces of Priam, the swords of the fierce warriors fell beneath the vision of her beauty. And Menelaus, her husband, whose marriage bed she had desecrated, struck dumb by her beauty, loving her still, took her back to Sparta in the curved ship, and made her his queen again.

Then, for yet another ten years, was Odysseus a wanderer over the wine-dark waves. Many and strange were the adventures which befell him. First he came to the land of the lotus-eating men, where strangers that eat of the enchanted fruit forget their homes. Next, he put out the eye of the giant Polyphemus of the race of the Cyclops. After that he lived for two years in the halls of the fair enchantress Circe, who by her magic slights turned men into swine. Then, indeed, he sailed in the black ship to the dank house of Hades, where he spoke with the spirits of the mighty dead. He it was who heard the voices of the Sirens, sweet as the honeycomb, and yet escaped destruction. Then, wrecked on the isle of Ogygia, for seven years he was loved by the fair goddess Calypso. And at last he reached the rugged isle of Ithaca, and slew the wooers of his wife, Penelope, with the mighty bow which none but he could draw.

So, in the twentieth year, Odysseus of many devices returned to his own country. Pleasant it was to sit again in his fair-lying house, and to drink the honey-sweet wine ; pleasant to lie by the side of the constant Penelope, and to recount the tales of his wandering, until sleep came upon him, sleep that loosens the

limbs of men; pleasant to watch the feeding goats and the feeding kine, and to stand in the terraced vineyard, and to walk through rows of apple trees and rows of fig trees; pleasant to wander over the rugged island, to climb the forest-clad hills, to rest in the cool cavern sacred to the naiads. Pleasant, too, to converse with Telemachus, his tall, strong son, whom twenty years before, setting out to Ilium, he had left an infant in his mother's arms. All his craft he taught him, both in the games and in the press of foes. Casting the weight he taught him, and wrestling, and boxing, and the handling of the polished bow, and the throwing of the ashen spear heavy with bronze. A quiet resting place was the island after so much travail and sorrow. So the peaceful years drifted by.

Sometimes, indeed, Odysseus would go to the Haven of Phercys, where he had landed, and sit under the olive tree with spreading leaves. There, watching the mighty waves, with the murmur of the sea in his ears and the wind on his face, he would live again the perils of the past.

Once again he sailed in the hollow ship, and saw the godlike Achilles, and Menelaus of the loud war cry, and Agamemnon, King of Men, and fought again the battles of long ago on the plains of Ilium, where for the sake of white-armed Helen, fair among women, the bodies of so many heroes were given to be a prey to the winged fowls. Once again he heard the terrible groans of the Cyclops, as the red hot stake of olive wood hissed in his mighty eye, and spake with the spirit of his mother in the realms of Hades, and came to the Rocks Wandering, and saw the flaming bolt of Zeus smite his swift ship, so that he alone escaped.

Strange, indeed, after so many adventures, to follow the quiet uneventful life of the island—to visit the huts of the swineherds, to watch the thralls ploughing the farm-land, to give laws to simple peasants, to talk with open-mouthed rustics who knew not the mighty world beyond. So the days and years passed. And Odysseus, of many devices, sacker of cities, sat by the fire in his hall, and polished with oil his unused weapons.

Always he heard the thunder of the sea, calling, entreating. Often, especially on rough days, he would go down to the Haven, and plunge into the foaming waters and swim with mighty strokes. Afterwards he would sit watching the white-crested waves as they flung themselves in great curves upon the beach.

And he remembered, too, the saying of Tiresias, that from the sea his death should come.

Then, suddenly, one morning he found that his mind was made up. And going down to the Haven, he spoke to the mariners winged words :

" Prepare ye the black ship, my friends, and set the gear in order, for on the morrow we depart over the wine-dark deep. We are old, but many toils and perils await us ere we die. And carry to the ship corn, and flesh, and red wine, and dainties to our hearts' desire."

To his comely son, Telemachus, he said :

" Lo, to you, my child, falls the lordship of this isle. Thy business it is to judge impartially and to keep ever-ready the shining spear, and to offer sacrifice to the immortal gods."

And to the tears of his wife Penelope he answered :

" For ten years I fought on the plains of Ilium, and for ten years I wandered far and wide, seeing strange cities and learning the minds of men. For ten years I have lived at home, but now again the craving for wandering possesses me, and the sea is ever calling. But whether I come again or perish in the wars of men or in the grievous waves, lies in the lap of the gods."

And when early dawn shone forth, the rosy-fingered, Odysseus and his company went on board, and loosed the hawsers, and raised the mast of pine tree, and hauled up the white sail. So Odysseus, of many devices, set out again on his adventures.

For seven days they sailed, with the song of the wind in their ears, and their brown limbs drenched with spray. And as they rowed they sang old battle songs, and songs of the giants that warred against the deathless gods, and songs of Helen of the white hands, for whom the Achaians for ten long years besieged Ilium.

And on the evening of the seventh day they came to the land at a place where a murmuring river reaches the sea. Then they took their bows and began shooting at the wild goats, and skinned them, and divided them, and pierced the flesh with spits and roasted it. So they feasted on abundant flesh and red wine. And when the sun had sunk they laid them to rest upon the sea-beach, and took the boon of sleep.

Now when the early dawn, the rosy-fingered, shone forth, noble Odysseus, taking in his hand two shining spears, leaving his companions with the ship, went to spy out the land.

And as he went through the woods he rejoiced in his heart because he was on his wanderings again, because there might befall him some great adventure. For, though old, he thirsted for toils and perils innumerable.

At last he reached a cave, hidden in a thicket of alder. And before the cave stood an old woman with white hair and wrinkled skin and withered body. And when she saw Odysseus she became pale with fear, and she spake to him winged words.

" Of a surety, Stranger, I know that thou art sent to take away my life, but do thou show mercy on me and have pity. Sweet is the light of heaven, even to an old woman, even to a wretched outcast."

Then Odysseus, of many counsels, answered her, saying : " Put away fear, Lady, for there is no evil against thee in my heart, nor has any one sent me to take away thy life. But tell me why, albeit weak with age, thou livest in hiding."

And the old woman, shedding warm tears, answered : " Once, indeed, I lived in the lofty hall flashing with bronze and silver and gold. But now my lord is dead, and his son, born of a slave woman, drives me from the land."

Then was Odysseus moved with compassion, and he spoke unto her winged words.

" Sad, indeed, is the common lot of age, when the limbs become feeble and the eyes dim. Sad, too, it is when one who has the joy of possessions meets with misfortune. Yet calamity is from the gods, and no mortal may escape nor avoid his fate."

So spake they together. And Odysseus, returning to the curved ship, brought back goat's flesh, and bread and red wine. But when the old woman had eaten and comforted her heart with food, he spake to her in this wise :

" First, I will tell you my story, and afterwards you shall tell me yours. But I cannot hope to tell you all, for I could easily speak for a whole year and not make an end of my adventures. For I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, of many devices, whose fame reaches unto Heaven."

" I have heard of thee, Odysseus," answered the old woman, warming her crooked fingers at the fire.

Then Odysseus told her of wild, rugged Ithaca, his island home, surrounded by the loud-sounding sea, with its wild goats and deer and violets and rose-bushes. And he told her how, when a young man, he had sailed with his twelve black ships

to the siege of Ilium, and how for ten years the Achaians fought with the Trojans to regain Helen of the lovely hair. Of the heroes he told her—of his valiant friend Diomedes, and Aias, the strongest and bravest of men, and the great Achilles who slew Hector, the noblest of the Trojans—and of Helen of the white breast, gracious and charming, the fairest woman that ever lived in the world, whom no man could behold without loving.

And he spoke of his own adventures in those far-off days—how he and his comrade, strong Diomedes, crept at night into the Trojan camp and slew twelve men of the Thracians and Rhesos their king, whose chariot and swift-footed horses they drove to the camp of the Achaians; how in the ninth year of the war by his eloquence he persuaded the Achaians not to give up the siege; how he was wounded by the godlike Sokos, whom he slew with his mighty spear, when Hector, tamer of horses, led the Trojans to cast fire among the ships; how at the funeral games after the burial of Patroklos he wrestled with the great Aias, neither being able to gain the victory, until they took equal prizes; and how, at last, it was by his strategy that Ilium was taken.

"Always," said Odysseus, "I remember Helen, beautiful Helen, with her lovely breast and sparkling eyes. And when men fell, smitten by the spear of bronze or the silver-studded sword or the long-barbed arrow, and dark death closed their eyes, even then they thought it small blame that the Trojans and Achaians should suffer for such a woman. Nay, even old King Priam blamed not her for the dolorous war, but rather the gods. . . .

"And now Ilium lies in ashes, and King Priam and his sons are dead, and all my old comrades. And on me has come old age, grievous to be borne. But always I remember Helen in her fluttering white raiment, beautiful and gracious and ever young . . . ."

Then the old woman laughed, showing her toothless gums.

"Odysseus, son of Laertes—Odysseus, of many devices—do you not know me? For I am she for whom the Trojans and the Achaians fought on the windy plains of Ilium—Helen of the white hands—Helen of the lovely hair . . . beautiful and gracious and ever young . . . ."

Weak with age, holding out her trembling hands to the fire, the old woman sat there. And beneath his eyelids the cheeks of Odysseus were wet with tears.

LIAM O'FLAHERTY.

DARKNESS

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS.

ACT I.

SCENE : *A thatched three-roomed cabin with whitewashed walls cover the rear of the stage, with an opening on either side of it. A dark painted door is in the centre of the wall, with a window on either side of the door, at equal distances from the door and the gables. The roof of the house retreats at a sharp slope out of sight. In the yard in front of the house there are large granite rocks scattered here and there. A rough track crosses the front of the yard. Rough tools, used by primitive peasants to root up the earth are thrown by the wall of the house.*

It is midday and there is a dead calm, with a dull brooding feeling in the darkened air. As the curtain rises MARY, an old woman, is sitting on a rock to the right of the door. She is knitting. Her son, DARK DANIEL, comes out of the house. He stands near her, his arms folded, gazing ahead gloomily. The old woman drops her knitting in her lap and looks at him for a moment. Then she speaks.

MARY. Where are you going, Daniel ?

DANIEL. I have to change the cow from the Fairy Field. She has nothing there to eat and the well among the flags is dry. I will put her in the Great Crag. She'll have grass there to drag from the deep fissures while the drought lasts. And there is water for her in the rock pools.

MARY. You should have done that since morning.

[*She takes up her knitting and bends over it.*]

DANIEL. [*Shaking his hands above his head and turning to the left*] Ach !

MARY. [*In a nagging voice.*] It is midday now and you haven't stirred from the hearthstone since the milking of the cow.

DANIEL. [*Looking behind him at her.*] Go to the devil.

MARY. May your prayer not be answered ! Isn't the narrow field to be weeded and the weeds as tall as sticks there for a fortnight ?

DANIEL. [*Turning towards her savagely.*] Let it be. I don't care any more for the sowing of Spring or for the reaping of the Autumn. Let it rot. Let the weeds smother it. May it not grow by day nor swell with the dew of night. What is it to me ?

MARY. [*Throwing back her body and stretching forth her hands, aghast.*] Son of perdition ! Son of madness !

DANIEL. [*Crouching over her, with his right hand raised arrogantly aloft.*] Shut up ! Listen to my talk. It's not with madness I am speaking but with the darkness that is fallen on my heart. Am I not now for twenty years harrowing the earth since my father and my three brothers were drowned and I a lad. Harrowing and rooting for you and for Brian, the pet of your old age ?

MARY. [*Rising and menacing him with her two hands.*] Ungainly lout ! Brian is the cause of your madness. You hate my beautiful son that was formed in the same womb as you. You are jealous of the beauty of his body.

DANIEL. [*Suddenly striking his forehead and making for a rock, crouching.*] Mother, there is darkness on my heart and I don't know what I say. [*He sits on the rock.*] I'm an ungainly lout and there is darkness on my heart.

[MARY *comes to him. She puts a hand on his head.*]

MARY. [*Softly.*] Son ! Forgive my word. I spoke in anger. Even if he is an ungainly lout, a son is beautiful to his mother. Am I not proud of the strength of your hand and the eagerness of your eye, when you are tearing up the grassy earth in Spring, putting black soil on the seed. But you are sick, my treasure. Tell me the cause of your sorrow. Speak my share of the world.

DANIEL. [*Downcast.*] I have no sickness but a sickness that cannot be cured.

MARY. Speak, son. There is a healing herb in every mother's heart. There is no profit in hiding sorrow. Let it from you softly with the words of your mouth.

DANIEL. [*Rising suddenly and going from her.*] Let me alone. I cannot make my complaint to you. [*He stands. He looks at the sky. He raises his voice.*] I will make my lamentation to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the mountains and to the insects that are murmuring in the grass of the earth. I have no kinship with people. I'm an ungainly lout.

MARY. [*In terror.*] What queer talk is this ?

[*She sits, awed, on the rock from which* DANIEL *rose.*]

DANIEL. [*Returning to his mother.*] Who ever spoke to me with love ? Whoever smiled at me walking the road or gathering seaweed on the shore ? Whoever made conversation with me on a grassy mound when the red sun was drowning in the sea ?

[*He stumbles up and down the yard, raving as he speaks.*]

MARY. [*Almost in tears as she rocks herself.*] O, Son ! Son ! What ails you ? What ails you at all ? Isn't it well I know the hardship and the misery you have got from your life ?

DANIEL. [*Halting suddenly and crying savagely.*] A hag's devilry !

MARY. Going with the dawn in winter when the hoar frost was like a cloak of poison on the crag and the white sea torn with the wind.

DANIEL. [*Roving up and down again.*] Yes ! You can talk now, but the day of storm is not the day to make a house secure. Now the devil's game is played and I am wounded. It's your fault.

MARY. My fault, son !

DANIEL. [*Standing before her.*] Yes. It's your fault with the way you petted Brian. Was I not standing lonely on the desolate shore, gathering seaweed for the sowing of Spring, up to my neck in the freezing sea, with a pitchfork in my hand, stooping for the red strands of seaweed that would be carried past me on the tide, while he was lying cuddled in the blankets ?

MARY. Don't blame me for that. Blame yourself as well. Didn't you, too, shelter him from hardship ? Don't I remember the night well when you shed tears over his bed and he a boy ;

when the red light of sickness was on his cheeks and a poisonous cough smothering him ?

DANIEL. Well ? And what sickness has he now ? Going lightheaded among the women and making a rake of himself all over the island without doing a stroke of work ?

MARY. Doesn't he fish ?

DANIEL. What good is fishing ?

MARY. [*Looking up the track suddenly.*] Whist ! Here comes *Beautiful Bridget* and her daughter, *Proud Margaret.*

[BEAUTIFUL BRIDGET *and* PROUD MARGARET *enter from the left.*]

MARY. God be with ye. How are you, Bridget ?

BRIDGET. God and Mary with ye. Oh ! Indeed I am not very well. There are signs of thunder in the eastern sky and the sea is growling loudly in the Fountain Hole. That is a sign of a storm. There will be a thunderstorm to-night.

[BRIDGET *sits on a rock near* MARY. *She peers closely at* DANIEL. MARGARET *stands a little behind the women, near* DANIEL, *looking at him coquettishly.* DANIEL *does not look at her. He scowls and goes to the doorpost against which he leans.*]

MARY. [*Beginning to knit again.*] I fear the thunder since Coleman and my three sons were drowned.

BRIDGET. God have mercy on their souls ! It was about this time they were drowned. I mind it well.

MARY. They are drowned now twenty years.

DANIEL. They are, and I am twenty years in hardship.

MARY. [*Rocking.*] The day was so calm when they went westwards beneath the towering cliffs that the prow of their coracle did not break a basin full of froth on the oily surface of the sea.

BRIDGET. [*Also rocking with polite affected woe.*] The dome of heaven was spotless.

DANIEL. It's easy for ye to sorrow.

MARY. Then a whirlwind gathered in the east.

BRIDGET. It came westwards over the Hill of Slaughter in a black mass, with its sound rocking the sky.

MARY. It lashed the sea. There was nothing to be seen but the white froth rising through the darkness ; white ghosts of perdition rising from the blackness of the sea.

DANIEL. Foo !

[*He paces with cumbersome haste to a rock and plants his left foot on it and rests his chin in his palm. There is a slight pause. The women rock.*]

BRIDGET. They were never found.

MARY. Never. The brightness of my life was never found, neither he nor my three sons. Their graves are buried in the deep. And my heart is buried with them. Oh ! My sorrow !

DANIEL. Death is not a cause for sorrow, but a cause for joy. I, I am in hardship.

BRIDGET. Say not so Daniel. The sun does not shine in the darkness of death.

MARY. [*Raising her head and wiping her eyes.*] Do you hear him, Bridget ? Isn't this a curse that is following me ? My man and my three sons drowned on me and the two darling ones that are left to me growing anger in their hearts against each other.

BRIDGET. [*To Daniel.*] What's this I hear ?

DANIEL. Hag's talk. It's not anger that's growing in my heart. Nothing is growing in my heart, but everything is rotting in it from day to day.

MARY. A curse ! A curse !

BRIDGET. [*In pretended anger.*] That's not a proper answer to the sorrowful moan of a sick heart.

DANIEL. It's not a curse, but the way you petted Brian. Small credit to him to have a fine body. [*He turns fiercely to Margaret.*] His body is a body that never worked. [*He stretches forth his hands.*] But I am crooked with hardship.

BRIDGET. [*Rising.*] Whist, darling. I think there is a cure for your sorrow. Leave it to me and to your mother. Come into the house, Mary. I have a whisper for you about that thing the other day. Margaret speak to Daniel out here, my

treasure. Come on, Mary. There is nothing as healing as the soft whisper of a maiden when there is a wound in a young man's heart. Come in. Let us go in.

MARY. [*Entering the door.*] In the name of God !

[*The two women disappear into the house. The door is closed.* DANIEL *looks after them curiously.* MARGARET *watches* DANIEL, *her eyes smiling.*]

DANIEL. What work is this they have on foot ?

MARGARET. [*Advancing towards him swaying at the hips.*] How do I know ? What made you so cross, Daniel ?

DANIEL. [*Regarding her fiercely, with his legs spread.*] She devil !

[*He turns and walks from her two steps. He stands. Then he sits suddenly on a rock and puts his head between his hands.* MARGARET *follows him slowly, seductively. She stands beside him.*]

MARGARET. You are a foolish man, Daniel. [*Pause.*] Look at me. [*He looks at her gloomily.*] Don't you like me ?

DANIEL. Proud Margaret ! Your face is beautiful, but there is no pity in your heart. Your heart is hard like this rock. [*He strikes the rock on which he sits.*]

MARGARET. [*Laughing with her throat bent backwards.*] O ! How sweet your tongue is !

DANIEL. What good is to me to look at you ? It's not at me your mouth ever smiled. Mocking and temptation. Temptress !

MARGARET. [*Drawing closer.*] How clumsy your speech is ! [*Softly.*] I often smiled at you, Daniel, but——

DANIEL. Mocker !

MARGARET. But your head was stooping, as if it were tethered to the earth. Do you hear ?

[*He rises and he is moving away from her when she touches him gently. He starts violently and becomes rigid.*

MARGARET. Don't go. Wait. Listen. I'll tell you something.

DANIEL. What ?

MARGARET. You're wasting your life, with your head to the

earth from morning till night. Your life is lonely without a woman. That's the darkness that has fallen on you.

[*He begins to tremble, looking at the ground. She takes up his right hand in both hers.*]

Look at the strength of your hand. Is there anything in the world as wonderful as the great strength of a man's hand? Look at the big fingers that would smother the breath in a lion's throat. Look at the fair hairs growing as thickly as on a woman's head.

[*She steps a little away from him. He takes a step after her.*

I saw you one day seizing a bullock that went mad with the heat. You put a hand on his horn and another in his nostrils. You twisted his head. I was standing behind the wall among the shrieking women. I heard the snapping of the muscles like the snapping of a moored boat's cables in a storm. And the mad bullock was trembling and you were crouching over him . . . just as you are trembling before me now, Daniel.

DANIEL. Margaret. Say one word to me. Do.
MARGARET. What word?
DANIEL. Speak from your heart.
MARGARET. How?
DANIEL. Are you promised to Brian?
MARGARET. [*Laughingly.*] I promised to Brian!
DANIEL. Yes. Speak.
MARGARET. What put that in your head?
DANIEL. Are they not in there making the match?
MARGARET. For whom?
DANIEL. You and Brian.
MARGARET. Are you out of your mind?
DANIEL. Are you promised to him, I say?
MARGARET. What is it to you?

[*He seizes her hand. She gasps, terrified. She snatches away her hand. He tries to seize her. She beats him with her hands and cries.*]

MARGARET. Don't put your beast's paws on me.

[*She rushes from him. He stands, dumbfounded by the insult and his passion, his hands outstretched, looking at his hands.*]

EXIT THE BEAUTY-CHORUS.
By Sidney Hunt.

DANIEL. A beast's paws is it? [*Fiercely.*] I'd tear——

[*Just then the voice of* MERRY BRIAN *is heard approaching, singing as he comes.*]

BRIAN. [*At a distance and gradually approaching, is heard singing a merry song, a folk-song. Then he enters, halts and stops singing.*] Proud Margaret here! The sun is jealous.

MARGARET. [*Laughing.*] It's not Merry Brian you should be called, but Brian of the sweet tongue. Where were you?

BRIAN. I was fishing off the reef of the yellow cliff.

MARGARET. Where is the fish?

BRIAN. I left them on the flag to be cleaned.

MARGARET. Did you catch much?

BRIAN. Very little. There is some evil in the air.

MARGARET. A bad fisherman always blames the weather.

BRIAN. It may be so. But still there is something queer going to happen. When we put to sea at dawn, the sea was like a smooth floor, as if oil were spilt on it. And now the rock-birds are hiding in their holes. The seagulls are tacking through the sky and they are screaming. The fish have fled out into the deep. There is nothing to be found but dog-fish, the refuse of the sea.

MARGARET. It's small wonder for the fish to run from you.

BRIAN. Why?

MARGARET. If you were singing like a choking cock.

BRIAN. [*Pursuing her.*] Ha! You little devil! Wait till I——

[DANIEL *suddenly steps in front of* BRIAN. BRIAN *halts. They stare at one another.*

DANIEL. Let her alone. You can't fool about in my yard with the women of the village, you scoundrel.

BRIAN. Your yard is it?

DANIEL. Yes, my yard.

BRIAN. It's not yours yet. It's mother's yard.

DANIEL. She wouldn't have house nor yard only for me, that's working for her and for you from morning till night, while you are raking around without profit.

BRIAN. Without profit ? Isn't that the worse for myself, and not for you ? Haven't you the land ? Work it. I'm not putting in on you. The fishing is mine.

DANIEL. The land is mine is it ? Don't I share the crops with you and the cow's milk and the sheep's wool ?

BRIAN. Don't I share the fish with you ?

DANIEL. You have fine talk, you . . . you . . . you . . . but I'm wounded with hardship and it's you have the benefit.

BRIAN. Come now, brother, don't be telling your story to the women of the village.

MARGARET. Oh ! I'm going.

BRIAN. Don't go, Margaret. Wait. [*He smiles at her.*]

DANIEL. You don't care what I say, but I'll make you care.

MARGARET. Oh ! I'm going. It's I am vexing him.

BRIAN. Don't mind the lout.

DANIEL. A lout is it ? By the horned devil . . .

[*He rushes at* BRIAN. *They attack one another.* MARGARET *screams, calling for her mother. The old women rush out at the door. They seize the still struggling men.*]

MARY. Daniel ! Daniel ! Don't strike. Don't strike.

DANIEL. [*In a yell.*] Stand back.

BRIDGET. Separate them.

MARY. Catch his hands.

BRIAN. Let go my hands.

BRIDGET. Hold fast now.

[*They separate the men.*]

DANIEL. [*Held by the two women.*] Let me to him. Ah—h.

[*They drag* DANIEL *towards the house screaming. They enter the house. The door bangs shut.*]

BRIAN. Foo ! By the Stag of Hell ! [*He laughs airily.*] Were you afraid, Margaret ?

MARGARET. [*Fearfully.*] Every time I look at his two terrible hands I become afraid. He would only have to squeeze a person's throat with those hands and—[*she makes a gesture like being throttled*]. But you pay heed to nothing.

BRIAN. What's the use of worrying about life? There is enough darkness in the night without darkening the day with care. While the sun shines my heart is happy.

MARGARET. Your heart! You have no heart.

BRIAN. Why?

MARGARET. You're a butterfly flitting from flower to flower.

BRIAN. No, but from girl to girl. That's what is worrying you maybe.

MARGARET. Oh! The conceit of him! Flit away. There isn't the strength of a man in your hand.

BRIAN. That may be. But a butterfly doesn't need strength to taste the sap of a flower; the sweet sap of woman.

MARGARET. You senseless mocker.

BRIAN. I'm not mocking but in earnest.

MARGARET. That may be, as you said yourself. They say you are only half a man.

BRIAN. [*Angrily.*] Who said so?

MARGARET. Look at your little hands.

[BRIAN *stretches forth his hands and looks at them.*]

MARGARET. Your hands are like the little soft white hands of a woman.

[*She laughs. She flits to the left of the stage laughing and looking backwards at him. He rushes after her suddenly. He halts at the edge of the stage. He puts his hands in his hair. His face darkens with anger. Then his hands drop to his sides. His eyes and his mouth soften. The far-reaching light of love comes into his eyes. He begins to tremble slightly. He speaks softly, in a low voice.*]

BRIAN. What's coming over me? [*Pause.*] My heart is beating loudly and a . . . [*Pause.*] Proud Margaret . . . [*Pause*]. [*Then joyously.*] Little Margaret . . . My little treasure.

[*There is a short pause while he gazes in ecstasy. Then he starts as the door is opened. The two hags appear. They walk to the right of the stage conversing. They do not see Brian.*]

BRIDGET. That is the best thing for us to do.

MARY. There is no other woman I would rather have.

BRIDGET. And he is worthy of any woman, to sow and to reap and to protect a household.

MARY. Daniel is a good man, truly.

BRIDGET. And Margaret is as eager in a house as . . .

MARY. Oh! Indeed, you needn't tell me.

[*They disappear to the right.*]

BRIAN. [*Rushing across the stage.*] Now the devil is done.

[*He halts suddenly. He sees* DANIEL *standing in the doorway. The two brothers stare at one another. The*

CURTAIN FALLS.

N.B.—Only thirty seconds interval between first and second Acts. There should be perfect silence in the theatre (no music).

ACT II.

SCENE: *Same. BRIAN is sitting outside the house on a rock, with his head between his hands, singing sadly a love-song called "Maureen De Barra." Mary comes out of the house to him.*

It is evening. A thunderstorm threatens.

It is already quite dusk.

MARY. Arise, my son. What use is it to be sorrowful? Come into the house and eat something. Come. Oh! my son! my son! Obey your mother. Don't break the heart in me. Come.

BRIAN. Let me alone, mother. Let me be.

MARY. [*Walking desolately out over the centre of the stage.*] Dear! Dear! Was the darkness raised from Daniel's heart

to cast it down on Brian's ? He is gone now merrily to the cow while my little Brian——

BRIAN. [*Jumping up.*] Is it any wonder for him to be merry ? And you after enticing my girl from me so as to satisfy him.

MARY. [*Turning to him.*] Don't say that, my treasure. How did I know that you were in love with her ? Or in love with any woman ? I thought it was how he was jealous of you about the work. If I had only known that . . . [*making a hopeless gesture*] but what could be done ? Oh ! Brian my heart is sore. [*She sits on a rock.*] Is this evil I have done instead of good ? Great God of Glory answer me. Two darling sons and a mother that loves them both alike. Hard, hard is my lot.

[*She weeps aloud.*

BRIAN. Mother ! Mother !

[*He rushes to her. He puts a hand on her shoulder.*

Don't cry, mother. My heart is wounded when you cry. Listen, mother. Listen. I will do anything in the world for you, but don't cry.

MARY. [*Wiping her eyes.*] Don't blame me, son. The tears broke under my eyelids in spite of me.

BRIAN. [*Kneeling on one knee.*] It's my fault, mother. I'm not used to suffering. You and Daniel always sheltered me from suffering since I was born. But a flood tide of sorrow is now making a great cold lake around my heart. It is manifest now to me that this sorrow comes sometimes to every man's heart. Strength does not grow in the mind until sorrow has pierced the heart.

MARY. Brightness of brightness, how sweet is the sound of your voice.

BRIAN. Mother, you are . . .

[*Suddenly he stops. He sees* DANIEL *enter the stage from the right.*

BRIAN. Brother !

[BRIAN *rises.* MARY *rises.* DANIEL *stands. The three of them gaze for a time. Then* BRIAN *approaches his brother.*

Are you still angry with me, Daniel ?

[DANIEL *looks at him angrily at first. Then he looks at his mother. His face softens. He is fighting in his heart with anger and love for Brian.*

MARY. Speak to him, Daniel. I beg you, my son. Come together now. Gladden my heart. Gladden the sad heart of your mother—my pulse. I have only the two of you in the world.

[DANIEL *begins to tremble, wiping his hands on his clothes. Then he speaks suddenly. His voice is wild and almost broken.*

DANIEL. I'm not angry with you, Brian.

MARY. Praise be the Great God of Glory. My heart is merry now. I will leave my darlings now to make your peace before they come to make the match. They should be on their way now. I will go up the road before them.

[*She leaves the stage. The two brothers stand some time looking ahead. Their hands are behind their backs. Their fingers are twitching. At last* DANIEL *speaks.*

DANIEL. There is terrible heat.

[BRIAN *starts. He does not look at* DANIEL

BRIAN. There is. The sky is darkening.

[*Another pause just as before.*

BRIAN. Was it changing the cow you were ?

DANIEL. Yes. [*Pause.*] It won't be safe to go fishing to-night.

BRIAN. No. There is a great movement in the sea beyond the point of the Black Precipice.

[*Another pause.* BRIAN *then attempts to approach his brother, but just then* DANIEL *also moves, attempting to approach* BRIAN. *They both start looking at one another. They stand trembling. Then* DANIEL *advances a pace His face is gentle with love for* BRIAN. *His mouth was opening to speak when a loud voice was heard afar. Both brothers start, become rigid, listening.*

MARY. [*From afar.*] A hundred thousand welcomes to you.

DANIEL. [*Excitedly.*] She is coming.

BRIAN. [*Excitedly.*] Daniel.

[DANIEL *does not notice. He is listening.*

BRIAN. [*Louder, almost fiercely.*] Daniel, I say. Does she love you?

[DANIEL *turns towards him slowly, soft, weak, simple.*

DANIEL. Little brother! Let me have her. Let me have her. Let her not come between me and you. My——

[*He stops, hearing the voice of* BEAUTIFUL BRIDGET, *as she approaches the stage.*

BRIDGET. [*Approaching.*] The sun is dim and gloomy. There is a shadow over its face, the dark shadow of evil filling the sky. [*She enters the stage and sees the two brothers.*] May God protect you both.

DANIEL and BRIAN. And ye, too.

[BRIDGET, MARY *and* MARGARET *walk across the stage.*

MARY. Let ye come into the house.

BRIDGET. Not yet. When there is anger in the heart it should be cast out under the great sky, where the soul can feel the beauty of the world. Peace must be made first, Mary. A match without goodwill is no match.

MARY. Oh! Put that out of your head, Bridget. If my two sons were jealous of one another, it's not so now. They have made their peace, praised be God.

BRIDGET. Is that true, Daniel?

DANIEL. That's true.

BRIDGET. Is that true, Brian?

BRIAN. It is, but——

BRIDGET. But what?

MARY. Brian! Brian! I beg you.

BRIDGET. Let him alone, I say.

DANIEL. You scoundrel, what are you——

MARY. Don't start on him, Daniel.

BRIAN. Let me have my say.

BRIDGET. This is no peace, Mary.

DANIEL. Don't blame me for it.

BRIAN. Let me speak, I say. I only want a word.

BRIDGET. Say the word.

BRIAN. I'd like to ask Margaret a question.

DANIEL. You devil, didn't you promise me . .

BRIDGET. Patience, man alive.

BRIAN. I asked you a question you didn't answer.

DANIEL. You're a liar.

BRIDGET. Don't mind him, Brian. Ask your question.

[*There is a slight pause.*

BRIAN. Margaret, are you in love with Daniel ?

[MARGARET *starts. She comes to the front of the stage in the centre. Her two hands are clasping her bosom. She gazes ahead. All look at her. They suddenly turn towards her as if by common intuition something strange had been made manifest to their minds ; something that had been drawing them on but which they could not grasp until now. There is a long pause.*

BRIDGET. Speak, child. [*Slowly, softly.*] Didn't you tell me that you were willing to marry him ?

[MARGARET *turns towards them suddenly.*

MARGARET. I did but . . . [*In a low voice.*] I don't know.

MARY. [*Angrily.*] What's this ?

BRIDGET. [*Angrily.*] Daughter.

MARGARET. [*Bitterly.*] Am I a slave that you can change from house to house ? And from master to master against my will ?

DANIEL. Didn't you tell me a while ago . . . ?

MARGARET. What did I tell you ?

BRIAN. Yes ?

MARGARET. [*Raises her hands.*] Oh ! My heart is broken and the fault is mine. [*Stretching her hands towards her mother.*] Mother, why do you look at me like that ? Let me speak to Daniel. Let you all leave us.

BRIDGET. That's the best thing for us to do. Let them settle it between them. Let us go into the house.

MARY. Girl, I implore you.

[BRIDGET *seizes* MARY.

BRIDGET. Come with me, Mary. Come, Brian.

[BRIAN *is about to follow them, but he looks at* MARGARET *and stands. He speaks in a loud voice.*

BRIAN. Could I say a word to you first, Margaret?

MARY. Come, Brian.

BRIAN. I won't.

MARGARET. I'll have to speak to Daniel first Brian.

[*Pause.*

BRIAN. That will do. I will go past the gable of the house until ye are finished.

[BRIAN *goes behind the gable of the house. The two women enter by the door. The door is closed.* MARGARET *goes to the left of the stage. Pause.*

MARGARET. Why don't you speak to me, Daniel?

[DANIEL *comes to the centre of the stage. He gazes ahead, his eyes wandering, his face twitching.*

DANIEL. I'm not a man for many words.

MARGARET. Have you nothing to say to me?

DANIEL. God! There is always something at the bottom of my throat, preventing me from talking, when I . . . when I try to speak from my heart. There is a flood of words in my heart, but they are frozen. I never spoke from my heart. Milking the cow in the evening, when the birds were singing in the branches and the sweet smell of the cow was making my heart happy and the great world lying peaceful around me, I . . I . . . [*He cries aloud.*] I wanted to cry aloud . . . but I never could.

[*Pause.* DANIEL *is rigid.*

MARGARET. [*Approaching him.*] Do you love me, Daniel?

DANIEL. [*Turning towards her.*] I will work for you until the skin cracks on my hands and until my spine twists with hardship.

MARGARET. But . . . but haven't you something else to say to me?

DANIEL. What? Is it about the land you. . . . The land is mine. Every sod of it. I believe Brian will be living in the house until——

MARGARET. Stop! Stop!

[DANIEL *approaches her trembling with outstretched hands.*

DANIEL. Margaret.

[*His face is wild with passion. She looks at him and she becomes afraid. She goes from him across the stage terrified. He follows her crying in an agonised voice.*

DANIEL. Margaret! Margaret!

MARGARET. [*At the gable.*] Brian! Come quickly. Keep away, Daniel.

[DANIEL *stands.* BRIAN *rushes around the gable.* BRIAN *and* DANIEL *stare at one another.*

DANIEL. You are coming between us.

BRIAN. [*Excitedly.*] I have only two words to say. Then I'll go. I'll follow my face in wandering.

DANIEL. Speak in my presence.

BRIAN. I can't. For God's sake . . .

DANIEL. There is treachery in your mind.

BRIAN. Believe me, brother. It's for mother's sake.

DANIEL. Go. Go. Don't come between us.

MARY. [*Rushing from the house.*] What's that? What's this?

MARGARET. [*Running towards Mary.*] Bring Daniel in with you.

BRIAN. [*To Mary.*] I have only two words to say.

[BRIDGET *rushes out.*

MARY. Come in, Daniel. Don't refuse him.

BRIDGET. Come in, my treasure.

[*They bring* DANIEL *into the house between them. The door is closed.* BRIAN *rushes to* MARGARET. *He takes her two hands in his and kisses them.*

BRIAN. Oh! You wonder of the world.

MARGARET. [*Throwing back her head.*] Ah ! God of Glory !

[*They look into one another's eyes.*

BRIAN. Now when you are gone from me, I know that you are my sun by day and my moon brightening the night.

MARGARET. [*Softly.*] I never heard that sound in your voice before.

[*He bends his head over her hands. She kisses his hair.*

[*Shivering.*] What question did you want to ask me ?

BRIAN. Now, when you are so near me in the loneliness of the night, I have no question to ask you but one I can't ask, since you are gone from me.

MARGARET. [*Weakly.*] I gone from you ?

BRIAN. Gone ! Gone ! And I to go from you through far wandering and desolation. You are my brother's now.

MARGARET. I'm not his yet.

BRIAN. Ah ! I would be a cowardly man if . . . God I have ruined my life.

MARGARET. Oh ! Why didn't you speak like this to me before ?

BRIAN. I was jealous. I thought that . . .

MARGARET. Damnation !

[*Pause. She sheds a tear.*

MARGARET. Do you love me ?

BRIAN. I love every drop of blood in your body. I feel desire in the very air that moves around you.

MARGARET. Oh ! My hound of the sea ! My heart and my soul belong to you. [*She puts her hands on his shoulders.*] Take me with you.

BRIAN. Don't tempt me.

MARGARET. With my two hands I will wait on you. And if we have only the dome of heaven for a house I won't envy the queen in her palace. Just while you are near me. My wild fisherman !

BRIAN. [*Trying to tear himself from her.*] That cannot be.

[*She puts her arms around his neck.*

MARGARET. My warrior ! Share of my heart ! Take me.

BRIAN. Don't tempt me. The devil is done and we are parted.

MARGARET. Nothing can part us but death.

BRIAN. There is something worse than death.

MARGARET. What ?

BRIAN. Shame.

MARGARET. You are afraid.

BRIAN. Of whom ?

MARGARET. Dark Daniel.

[*Pause. They part. He looks at the ground.*

BRIAN. It's not fear, but shame.

[MARGARET *utters a little sob of contemptuous grief.*

BRIAN. You don't believe me, Margaret ?

MARGARET. After all you said to me a minute ago, is not this a poor excuse you are making ? Deep love swallows fear and shame in its depth. I fear nothing and I'm ashamed of nothing, Brian, while I have you near me.

BRIAN. Oh ! Lord God ! Yesterday or this morning I would go with you to the end of the world. But now . . . I curse the day I was born.

MARGARET. Oh ! How cowardly are your words ! You are a butterfly that is frozen with the first sharp wind of autumn. You are afraid.

BRIAN. I'm not afraid. But I love Daniel that reared me and my mother whose heart would be broken if——

MARGARET. Isn't love stronger than mother or brother. Love only comes once. Don't let it go.

BRIAN. Have pity on me. My mind is mad with horror. My pulse ! Now or never I must do good for the good that has been done to me. I must suffer for their suffering. Farewell. Farewell.

[*They kiss fiercely.*

MARGARET. Don't go. Take me.

[*She falls on her knees. She embraces his knees.*

BRIAN. Let me go. Let me go.

[*He struggles away and rushes off the stage.*

MARGARET. [*Reaching out after him.*] Brian! Come back. Come back. I'm choking. Brian. [*She throws herself to the ground. She beats the ground with her hands. She shouts.*] Come back. O! O! O!

[*The two women rush out of the house followed by* DANIEL. *They stoop over her. They lift her up, shouting.*

THE TWO WOMEN. What's this? What's this?

MARGARET. Oh! Oh! Oh! He's gone. Bring him back.

THE TWO WOMEN. [*Leading her to the house.*] Whist darling, whist!

MARGARET. Bring him back. Bring him back.

[*They enter the house.* DANIEL *is alone on the stage. He stands, with his legs spread, squat, fierce, with his hands like claws in front of him, as if he were about to choke somebody.*

DANIEL. [*In a low savage voice.*] If he comes back . . .

N.B.—One minute between second and third Acts. Silence.

ACT III.

SCENE: *As before. An hour later complete darkness.* MARGARET *suddenly opens the door of the house and appears on the threshold, with her hand on the latch.*

MARGARET. I'm only going out into the yard for a moment.

BRIDGET. [*From within.*] Don't be long out under the cold of the night, my darling.

[MARGARET *comes out, closing the door behind her. A heavy darkness has fallen. There is no moon, no stars, no sound. She looks about her at the night as she walks out over the stage.*

MARGARET. How terrible the night looks! Everything is as still as death.

[*She halts, listening, and gazing ahead. She sighs heavily. She strikes her forehead with her hand. She begins to tremble.*

MARGARET. I wish it were death were facing me instead of . . . [*She walks a few steps.*] He's in there now sitting on a stool, with his hands on his knees, with his mouth open and his eyes half shut, like a beast watching . . . [*pause*] watching me. [*Pause.*] Lord God! What . . . ? [*Suddenly.*] I'll run. I'll run. But . . . Where'll I run? Where? Virgin!

[*She starts, suddenly hearing* BRIAN *enter the stage. She puts her hands to her throat.*

BRIAN. Margaret. Sht! It is I. Listen.

[*He runs to her, looking towards the house fearfully. He takes her in his arms and kisses her. She lies lifelessly in his hands, with her head thrown backwards.*

Share of my heart! My pulse! I had to come back. I couldn't leave you. Margaret! Speak, where are they?

MARGARET. [*Going from him.*] Go! Leave me. Go. You cowardly treacherous wretch, leave me. Coming now when . . . with your . . .

[*He seizes her again fiercely and puts his hand on her mouth.*

BRIAN. Stop! Stop! You'll have to come with me. I have the curragh ready on the rock. The oars are on the rowing pins. I have only to push her into the tide and be off. We'll reach the Lofty Island before the storm breaks.

MARGARET. Fool! Do you want to kill me?

BRIAN. There's no danger.

MARGARET. Be gone before——

BRIAN. I'd die first.

MARGARET. We'll be both dead if Daniel——

BRIAN. [*Fiercely.*] Daniel! To hell with him.

MARGARET. He'll follow us.

BRIAN. He can't. He was never in a curragh and it will be a raging hurricane in half an hour.

MARGARET. Be gone.

[*She rushes towards the door.*

BRIAN. [*Reaching for her with his hands.*] If you don't come I'll be drowned with the dawn.

[*She halts suddenly and wheels towards him. She comes to him, running. They kiss passionately. Then suddenly a clap of thunder bursts, a dull roar, afar off. They start. There is a short pause. They are gazing ahead timorously. Then* BRIDGET'S *voice is heard from within the house.*

BRIDGET. [*Within.*] Come in out of that, daughter.

[*They start again.* BRIAN *stoops, lifts her in his arms and rushes off the stage with her. As he stooped to lift her, his cap fell off. Another clap of thunder is heard, and then another. The door opens and* BRIDGET *appears.*

God save us! The sky is cracking. Margaret! Where are you? Margaret, I say!

[*Pause.* BRIDGET *becomes terrified.*

BRIDGET. Daughter! Where are you? Where are you?

[MARY *and* DANIEL *emerge. Another clap of thunder is heard.*

There is no sign of her. Oh, daughter!

DANIEL. [*Wildly.*] She's gone.

MARY. Have patience. Where would she be gone?

DANIEL. [*More wildly.*] She is gone with him. He came back.

BRIDGET. [*Mad with fright.*] With whom? With whom, man?

[DANIEL *crouches about peering at the ground, suddenly he yells.*

DANIEL. With Brian. [*He points.*] Ha! Look, at his cap.

[*They all rush to the cap, stoop over it, lift it up between them and examine it, feeling it with their hands excitedly, as if there was some occult charm in it. Then as a clap of thunder bursts rumbling they all start and make the sign of the cross on themselves. Each undergoes a mental change. They are all carried away, differently, into a sort of ecstasy of fear, while they stand that way motionless and aghast.* DANIEL *suddenly begins to tremble. He is staring in front of him, but gradually his hands rise, clawing, until they are level with his shoulders. Then he darts a suspicious, cunning glance at each of the women and he retreats backwards noiselessly toward the house a few paces. Then he turns and makes for the door. The woman, dazed and listening motionless, do not notice him.*

BRIDGET. [*As if waking from a dream.*] He was here.

MARY. He was.

[*They look at one another. They undergo another mental change. The stupor with which they were seized becomes active, expressing itself in a furious passion. They gaze in silence at one another, but their bodies gradually become more and more excited.*

BRIDGET. [*In a sudden shout.*] Now what has your brat done? My curse on him!

MARY. My share of misfortune on you! Whose fault is it but your daughter's. The shameless whore.

BRIDGET. You yellow shrivelled hag! It was an evil hour I set foot on your threshold.

MARY. I'll kill you, you she devil.

BRIDGET. There's a curse on your house.

MARY. Begone, demon. If you raised your daughter properly——

BRIDGET. You heap of sloth.

MARY. And she going with her head in the air——

BRIDGET. Stuck in the ashes you were when you should be——

MARY. Pride and selfishness have been eating her——

STUDY OF A NUDE.
B. Meninsky.

BRIDGET. One of your sons is a lout and——

DANIEL. [*Rushing from the house with a knife in his hand.*] There's going to be murder done. I'll have his life.

[*The two women start. They attempt to catch him as he rushes past them off the stage.*

MARY. Daniel! Daniel!

[DANIEL *disappears into the darkness.* MARY *begins wailing. She runs after him with her hands outstretched.* BRIDGET *pursues her and seizes her.* MARY *turns to* BRIDGET *and they embrace one another. Then they both begin to lament in the mode of the lamentation for the dead, the sound of their voices rising and falling in a sort of artificial rhythm.*

BRIDGET. Oc-oc-ochon! my beautiful daughter, my bright treasure!

MARY. Oc-oc-ochon! My children! My children, I am terrified.

BRIDGET. Whither, whither shall I go to find her; whither shall I turn my face in the morning?

[*Another thunder clap is heard. The women part. They move to and fro across the stage wailing.*

MARY. I am accursed. I am accursed.

BRIDGET. Oc-oc-ochon, my little Margaret.

MARY. Oh! I am forlorn and I . . .

BRIDGET. Pearl of my heart and you have gone from me.

MARY. And nobody left me in the end of my life.

BRIDGET. In the darkness of the world I will be in anguish.

MARY. Murder and drowning and I wailing.

BRIDGET. The sky being bent and you wandering.

MARY. Suffering, suffering and sorrow.

BRIDGET. Far wandering and the destruction of the sea.

MARY. Oc-oc-ochon, my two bright sons.

BRIDGET. Oc-oc-ochon, my merry daughter.

[*They meet. Three claps of thunder burst almost simultaneously in three different quarters of the sky.* MARY *raises her hands to heaven.* BRIDGET *seizes her by the bosom.*

MARY. Burst now you devil. Spill. Burst. Tear.

BRIDGET. [*Aghast with fear.*] Don't! God! Mercy!

MARY. I will. I will. My curse on the world. Spill. Burst. Tear. Fall. Fall. [*Screaming.*] Fall.

BRIDGET. [*Shrinking from her.*] She is mad.

MARY. [*Pursuing her.*] She witch, you are the cause of it. But I have you now.

[BRIDGET *screams. She turns rapidly from* MARY. MARY *pursues her heavily.* BRIDGET *rushes to the edge of the stage. Just as she is about to disappear she halts, gasps and throws up her hands. Then she retreats a pace.* BRIAN *and* MARGARET *stumble on to the stage, clasping one another. The two women cry aloud.*

THE TWO WOMEN. Woe! Woe!

BRIAN. [*Whispering.*] Who is here?

BRIDGET. Margaret.

[MARGARET *runs to her mother. They kiss.*

MARY. My little Brian!

BRIAN. [*Whispering.*] Where is Daniel?

MARY. [*Ordering him off with her hands.*] My little son! Run! Run! He is tracking you.

BRIAN. [*Waving his hands in the air.*] Whither? The curragh was swept from the rock. The sea rose in one wave. There's only white froth between the two islands.

MARY. Run, my son.

BRIAN. Whither?

[MARGARET *leaves her mother and rushes to* BRIAN.

MARGARET. Don't leave me.

BRIAN. Never!

MARY. [*To Margaret.*] Let him go.

BRIDGET. [*Catches Margaret.*] Let him go. Come away.

MARGARET. Never. Brian, take me away.

BRIAN. Protect us mother. Where is he?

MARY. Leave her to him. Hide among the caverns of the dead forest. Let her go. Let her go.

BRIDGET. Come, Margaret.

MARGARET. I won't. Come, Brian.

[*Suddenly a yell is heard from* DANIEL. *They all scream.* BRIAN *rushes towards the door.* DANIEL *rushes on to the stage, with his knife poised, in pursuit of* BRIAN. *The three women try to stop* DANIEL. *He darts past them.* BRIAN *enters the house.* DANIEL *plunges in after him. The women gasp. There is a moment's pause. Then a low agonising cry is heard from* BRIAN. *Then there is a heavy thud. The women are rigid. Then* DANIEL'S *voice is heard.*

DANIEL. [*Within.*] Ha! Ha! Ha!

[*The women scream and rush to the door. They enter. Loud cries are heard. Then* DANIEL'S *voice is heard again.*

DANIEL. [*Within.*] He is killed now.

[*Absolute silence. Then a low moaning sound rises from the house. The three women are wailing over the dead body.* DANIEL *staggers forth from the door, holding the bloody knife in his hand. The moaning sound increases.*

MARGARET. [*Subdued voice.*] Your little dead hand is in my hand.

MARY. Oc-oc-ochon.

BRIDGET. Oc-oc-ochon.

[*When their voices are heard* DANIEL *staggers to the left front of the stage. He peers into the darkness. He cries aloud.*

DANIEL. [*Aloud.*] Darkness!

[*He staggers towards the right of the stage.*

MARGARET. [*More subdued.*] My heart is frozen in me . . .

MARY. Oc-oc-ochon . . .

BRIDGET. Oc-oc-ochon . . .

[DANIEL *reaches the right of the stage. He peers ahead into the darkness. He cries.*

DANIEL. [*More subdued and as if he were choking.*] Darkness !

[*He staggers over to the centre front of the stage.*

MARGARET. [*Almost inaudible.*] Take me with you to the grave.

MARY. [*Almost inaudible.*] Oc-oc-ochon.

BRIDGET. [*Almost inaudible.*] Oc-oc-ochon.

[DANIEL *is at the front of the stage. He cries.*

DANIEL. [*Still more subdued.*] Darkness !

[*There is perfect silence.* DANIEL *begins to retreat to the door. His figure begins to crumble up and he is protecting his face with his left hand, while in the right hand he holds the bloody knife. He suddenly stiffens. He halts. Then he sinks down to the earth, crying out three times as he sinks.*

DANIEL. [*Low.*] Darkness ! [*Lower.*] Darkness ! [*Still lower.*] Darkness !

[*He lies prostrate.*

CURTAIN.

FEED MY SWINE.

MR. TRUGGIN could never forgive the people of Tadnol for not dying quicker. His reason was that his wife, who was called " The old Crow," took from him all the money that he earned as gardener to the Reverend Silas Dottery, and only permitted poor John Truggin to spend upon drink the money that he obtained at his occupation as grave-digger.

" 'Taint for I to spend what be wormy," Mrs. Truggin would say. " So what thee do get from digging they long holes in ground be thee's own."

" But," said Mr. Truggin, " folk baint always a-dying, and if thee would let I have what I do take at weddings I'd let they live for ever."

" No," replied Mrs. Truggin, " 'tis only mouldy money that be thine own."

Now and again the Reverend Silas Dottery would say to Mr. Truggin : " If anything goes wrong in the village—if the people behave foolishly and I am required to give them a proper reproof —then tell me, Truggin, and I will give you a present for your information."

Mr. Truggin always hoped for the best, but so far he had been unfortunate and had received no gift. The folly, he knew, must be something out of the common in order to obtain a present by it.

Mr. Truggin's own experience had taught him that it was no good carrying every tale that the old Crow told him at teatime to the Rectory. He brought upon himself a reproof by so doing. He had once explained the behaviour of certain young Tadnol women in the sunny fields to Mr. Dottery, but the minister had merely called Mr. Truggin's notice to the ways of the happy sparrows in a bush near by, and bid him remember that one of the Church fathers affirmed that young women have no souls.

" The Church must be propagated," said Mr. Dottery, sternly.

Mr. Truggin withdrew from the presence and went to the Rectory pig-sties and fed the swine.

For some while nothing occurred in Tadnol that could give to Mr. Truggin the desired fee for information of ill-behaviour, but one Saturday, when the sexton was finding the proper lesson for the Sunday morning in the great Church Bible and putting the grandly fringed ribbons into the proper places, his eye happened to catch the exciting words, " What shall we drink ? "

These words Mr. Truggin had often repeated in his own heart, and the reply to them that he used to say a great many times ever, was—" Beer ! "

The lesson was the sixth chapter of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew, beginning at the twenty-fourth verse. Mr. Truggin carefully read the passage. After reading the verses three times, the sexton addressed himself to his wife, who was peeping under the pews in the hope that some child had dropped a penny.

" Who be 'en who do talk in this book ? " asked Mr. Truggin.

" God," replied the old Crow, " and if it baint 'e, 'tis 'is family—for they be all one and the same."

" What God do tell folk to do they should do," remarked Mr. Truggin. " But if they don't—— ? "

" Why then," said Mrs. Truggin, " they'll be tossed into Hell."

" What do happen," enquired Mr. Truggin again, " to folk who take no thought to their lives ? "

" They die, I suppose," said Mrs. Truggin gladly, as she picked up a halfpenny.

Mr. Truggin stared hard at the Bible. A plan was forming in his head. He was lucky, too, for that very afternoon a young preacher—Luke Bird by name—happening to pass through the village from Dodder, where he then lived, began kindly enough to tell the people of Tadnol what would happen to them if they didn't obey the words of the Bible.

Mr. Bird preached on the green near to Mr. Croot's blacksmith's forge and only a little distance from Farmer Spenke's smallholding.

Mr. Spenke, who was leading an unwilling calf with a white face across the road, stopped to listen and Mr. Croot likewise laid down his hammer and stepped upon the green. Mr. Bird caught at once the imagination of his hearers by calling out :

" Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitants of Tadnol ! "

Neither the churchwarden, Mr. Spenke, nor Mr. Croot liked to hear such a prophecy, and having an unpleasant belief that Mr. Truggin would benefit by one or other of these happenings—for in his spare time the sexton was a rabbit-catcher—they waited to hear what could be done to avoid them.

The reply was simple. They must obey the commandments of the Son of God.

As is usual at Tadnol, anything of interest that happens in the day is discussed at the inn at night, and no inn in all the countryside is so friendly to polite conversation as that of Tadnol, called " The Setting Sun." The sign of this happy inn represents a sun of fine gold, half sunk behind a purple cloud, and the round red face of Landlord Toole, like the risen sun, in the parlour is ever ready to welcome the visitor. . . .

The summer clouds hung low, for it was late in May, and a small dripping and silent rain was falling when Farmer Spenke and Mr. Croot entered the " Setting Sun," anxious to discuss, away from their wives, whose only talk was of the sins of others, the meaning of Mr. Bird's sermon. But it was impossible, of course, to discuss such a matter properly without Mr. Truggin, who, as grave-digger, had the first right to understand religion.

Sometimes even Tadnol Inn could be dull, and with the pit and fear weighing upon them this evening, and a damp summer, too, that had crept into Mr. Spenke's trousers and had given him rheumatism, there was a heaviness in the parlour that even the sight of Mr. Toole's round and rosy face could not lift.

When Mr. Truggin arrived he presented himself with the sad look that he used for weddings, because the money he earned upon these occasions he was not permitted to spend, so that he always wished that the bride's frock could be changed to a shroud.

" Maybe thee did listen to preacher," asked Blacksmith Croot of Mr. Truggin, " and thee be afraid of the pit, too ? "

" And so I be," replied Mr. Truggin, " for I do know more than most folk about they places."

" 'Tis nice to live," observed Mr. Croot, " and if I did but know what the Almighty do command, I'd obey His laws."

Mr. Truggin looked very wise.

" There be words in the Bible," said Mr. Truggin, imitating, as well as he knew how, the tone and voice of his master, the

Reverend Silas Dottery, " that if we do obey to the uttermost, we shall be saved from fear."

" Thee be thirsty," said Mr. Spenke, looking happier and pushing his mug to Mr. Truggin. " Drink."

" And I," said Mr. Croot, " will treat 'ee to a pint if thee will but read out what they words be, for 'taint no snare that I do want to catch me foot in."

Mr. Truggin didn't reply, but regarded Landlord Toole, with a sad look.

" Thee could fill a pit, too, as well as another, landlord," the sexton said.

" I'll treat 'ee too," murmured Mr. Toole, " if thee will but read to we what we can do to be saved."

" 'Tis all in the Bible," answered Mr. Truggin.

" Then do thee fetch the holy book, landlord," said Farmer Spenke.

Mr. Toole was absent for some moments, and when he returned he explained that there was nothing of the family Bible left, but the cover.

" It's all been used for they taps," he said, " for who don't know that paper must be put round a tap before 'tis hammered into barrels."

Mr. Croot and Farmer Spenke looked at one another.

" There be a Bible in Church," remarked Mr. Truggin.

" Do 'ee fetch 'en, sexton," said Landlord Toole, " and thee may drink free to-night."

While the sexton was gone the company discussed the matter of salvation in a very solemn and serious manner.

" I hope," said Mr. Croot, " that they words that sexton be going to read baint too hard for we to understand."

" No, no," replied Farmer Spenke, reassuringly. " We'll know what they do mean, and if they be a little hard, why, Truggin will explain, for 'e don't feed they large Rectory swine for nothing."

Mr. Croot was growing happier.

" We'll treat Truggin," he shouted, " for when we do know they blessed words, we'll tell all the folk of Tadnol, and no one won't be snared or frightened."

" A wedding be better to we than a funeral," remarked Mr. Spenke significantly, for he had five unwedded daughters.

" So 'tis," replied Mr. Croot, thinking of his own happy one, " for a woman when she be good iron be easy to bend."

" There be someone outside," said Mr. Toole.

" 'Tis Truggin," observed the farmer.

Mr. Truggin staggered in. He carried the weighty Church Bible in his arms, like a babe, and placed it carefully upon the parlour table.

" Now do 'ee, sexton," said Mr. Croot, " read out to we what we must do."

Mr. Truggin sat down before the great book. He found his glasses, blew upon them, wiped them on his coat and put them on. Mr. Truggin began to read.

In the middle of the twenty-first verse of the chapter that had caught his attention Mr. Truggin stopped to rest, but, after a moment or two, he said, looking at the company, in the tone of one who likes the words he reads and picks out the best of them for practice—" What shall we drink ? "

A filled mug was placed before Mr. Truggin.

The chapter was soon finished, and the company, with the exception of Mr. Truggin, looked a little doubtful as to its meaning. "Tell us, sexton, what we have to do," asked Mr. Croot.

" Consider the lilies," replied Mr. Truggin softly, " and take no thought for the morrow."

" But to-morrow be Sunday," observed Mr. Spenke, " and no woon do think of thik day—only they bad maidens."

" 'Tis Monday that be meant," replied Mr. Truggin, decidedly, " Monday, the twenty-ninth of May . . . "

Everyone in Tadnol, and even the Reverend Silas Dottery, had heard what the preacher had said was going to happen to the village, and on the Sunday all heard, too, of the new manners that, if they chose to live them, might save from the pit and from the snare. Even the younger Tadnol maids, whose behaviour down the lanes resembled the happy sparrows, listened with attention because they were always sad when their mothers told them to take thought for the morrow and to help with the washing. Mr. Dottery preached on the Sunday to an empty church, while the people, old and young, stood about in groups and considered how happy their lives were going to be—for no little girl even need any more think of darning her stockings, because they would all now live like the lilies and the birds.

" Though I know there baint much of a lily about I," Black-

smith Croot said, " yet I mid learn—in time—to live like a cauliflower . . . "

The Reverend Silas Dottery, the Rector of Tadnol, was a worthy minister—a little choleric, perhaps, when his teeth ached—and friendly as all old bachelor scholars should ever be, to good port. He had been known to take a bottle to church instead of a sermon, and had placed it in a corner, where later the bottle was found by Mr. Truggin, who was discovered that same evening leaning against a grave-stone, happy and silent.

Mr. Dottery was interested in history as well as in port wine, and, as everyone is aware, spent most of his spare time in writing the history of the kings of England, that he intended should correspond with Miss Strickland's " Lives of the Queens."

As soon as ever the winds began to blow, Mr. Dottery apprehended the likelihood of a breath of damp air blowing from the river and attacking his teeth—toothache being the one and only evil that he suffered from—and so he would shut himself up in his study, pile up his folios upon the table to screen him from the draught, and say to Mr. Truggin who brought in the coals—for Mr. Dottery had a fire all the year round—that he hoped he hadn't forgotten that morning to feed the swine.

" And remember, it's your place to tell me what goes wrong in Tadnol, and I will pay you for your trouble—— "

Mr. Dottery breakfasted late on Mondays, for that was his happiest day. During the week he became more sad, because of his Sunday's sermon, for he used to tell his older friends that the King of kings was the most difficult monarch in the world to describe in suitable words.

" If only He had behaved like one of the Edwards, I might keep Farmer Spenke awake for at least ten minutes."

Mr. Dottery left his breakfast table at a quarter past twelve and went into his study His favourite books were about him, piled high. He looked out of the window. The common people worked somewhere out there and the sparrows and the girls played. From the direction of the Rectory pig-sties there came loud grunts and squeals--a sure sign that Truggin had forgotten to feed the swine. Mr. Dottery turned to his table, with a sigh.

But Mr. Dottery's eyes, as an author's will often do who has no need to hurry, looked out of the window again before he concluded a chapter he was writing about the Restoration of

Charles II. He remembered happily that that was the very day when the king landed in England, when he noticed Mr. Truggin, the gardener, who was wearing an old clerical coat of his master's, moving in a strange manner along the Rectory hedge, as if he did not wish to be seen.

Mr. Truggin peeped cautiously over the hedge into the lane to see if he were being followed, but, seeing no one, he suddenly began to run—a new way of progress for the sexton—and vanished in the direction of the Rectory backdoor.

Though his breakfast had been a good one, Mr. Dottery had noticed that his cup of tea didn't taste as tea should to one who likes the addition of good creamy milk, and when a knock came at the door, he supposed that Mrs. True, his housekeeper, had come to make her apology. Mr. Dottery bid her come in.

Mrs. True entered and, expressing by her looks both astonishment and anxiety—as though she had been listening to a strange tale—admitted Mr. Truggin, and withdrew.

Mr. Truggin stood before his master with his hat in his hand.

" 'Taint no Lily Spenke behaving like a goldfinch, this time," he said slowly. " And 'taint no ' what shall we drink ? ' neither with the folk upon the green."

" Tell me," said Mr. Dottery, looking sternly over the wall of books. " Has Farmer Spenke drowned his daughters in the Tadnol river ? "

" No," said Mr. Truggin, " but worse be happened. They foolish folk 'ave been reading God's word."

" You astonish me, Truggin, " observed Mr. Dottery smiling. " Be so good as to explain yourself."

" They have searched the scriptures and be obeying them," replied the sexton. " They don't take no thought for nothing."

" What are they doing then ? " enquired Mr. Dottery.

" Seeking the Kingdom of Heaven and drinking Landlord's beer," answered Mr. Truggin.

" I conclude from what you tell me, Truggin," observed Mr. Dottery, after a moment's silence, " that, instead of attending church yesterday, these doltish clowns have been misreading the Holy Gospels."

" That's just what they have been a-doing," said the sexton eagerly, " and Landlord Toole 'ave brought 'is last barrel down to the green and the maids be dancing."

Mr. Dottery turned the matter over in his mind. He stood up excitedly.

" The fools have made an historic mistake," he said. " They have read and obeyed the words of a king whose kingdom is not of this world. . . . But they can rejoice to-day," said Mr. Dottery, seeing the matter in this new light, " in the Restoration of King Charles II—an easier monarch and less dangerous to obey."

" Baint this news worth a reward ? " asked Mr. Truggin gleefully.

" It certainly is," replied Mr. Dottery, and handed a crisp Treasury note to Mr. Truggin. " You may go now, sexton," he said, " and I will consider what had better be done and how to explain the mistake."

As soon as Mr. Truggin was gone, the Reverend Silas Dottery put on his overcoat, wrapped a shawl around him, and went out, too. As became a good Christian, he went first to the church, knelt at the altar and prayed that God might make soft and tender the stony hearts of all those who exalt themselves and seek to trouble the quiet of this realm of England. After his prayer was over Mr. Dottery visited the green.

There he saw the men of the village, resting happily beside Mr. Toole's barrel that had already been emptied. Farmer Spenke and Blacksmith Croot were smiling contentedly at one another, and Mr. Toole was gazing up into the blue heavens. The young people were dancing and the old women were telling one another that, since Mabel had been found drowned in the farmer's pond, nothing so exciting as this obedience to God had happened at Tadnol. The cows at Mr. Spenke's farm were lowing because no one had thought of milking them, and the Rectory pigs were letting all the world know, by their squeals, that they hadn't been fed.

Mr. Dottery stepped upon the green.

" Foolish people," said Mr. Dottery, " what you have read in the Gospel of St. Matthew was not meant for you, but only for the happy subjects of the King of Heaven. If you obey the Gospels without the Holy Spirit's guidance—and your pastor's advice—you will certainly become rebels against God and His anointed king of England. Those words, as you have interpreted them, are the very pit and snare that Mr. Bird spoke of,

and if they are hearkened to unwisely, they will bring Tadnol to certain destruction."

Mr. Dottery paused for breath.

" I noticed," he continued, " that Mrs. True only gave me skimmed milk for breakfast. Be so good, Lily Spenke, as to leave off dancing with Tommy Toole and go to milking. Do not trouble to change your raiment."

Mr. Dottery turned to the men.

" I will rejoice with you," he said, " for this day—two hundred and sixty-six years ago—a great and good king was restored to his own. We will have evensong at seven and use the proper form of prayer, thanking Almighty God for the restoration of the Royal Family. And now, Truggin, I will add a new word to those that, in their ignorance, the people have understood so foolishly—Feed my swine ! "

Mr. Truggin turned to the Rectory sty.

INCARNATION.

CEASELESS the magic pollen drifts,
Unshaped, but germed with shaping power:
Too rare to price, it brings its gifts
To him whose clasp can keep its dower.

A wave of sound, a glimpse of light,
A fragrance wafted from the past,
Sudden enchantment to the sight
Can weave the spell that holds them fast.

Like seed in earth's dark, potent womb,
Budding unseen of human eyes,
And soaring from its cradle-tomb,
When it is fledged in fitting guise,

So the unhoused, unmoulded grain,
Snared by the spirit's cryptogram
To blossom in a wizard brain,
Light-ward exults: "I am! I am!"

In molten flux it stirs and strives,
Shred-wise united, shred-wise torn,
Till with a bursting of its gyves
In pangs of rapture it is born.

INITIATION.

IN the old room above the darkening square,
When the acacias had begun to drowse,
In the old room (oh, the dead echoes there !)
I spoke my litany of youthful vows.

The mute surrender gathering in her eyes
Slew the past years, and in my soul arose
The mournful splendour of a day that dies,
The radiant magic that a dawn bestows.

For then the pall of chill and shadowy days
Through which I had been groping till that hour,
Was lifted, and with newly kindled gaze
I saw a sudden miracle in flower,
While my whole life before that moment seemed
A lifeless thing that I had only dreamed.

SICILIAN OCTAVE OF THE LECTURE-ROOM.

THIS fat professor is a monstrous bore.
—Hark to the bird that twitters from the lawn.
What gritty shreds of desiccated lore !
—Hark to the bird that twitters from the lawn.
What hellish heat ! I thought I heard a snore . . .
—Hark to the bird that twitters from the lawn.
O frowning finals ! Only six weeks more.
—O happy bird that twitters from the lawn.

SUBURBAN LANDSCAPE.

PALLID with heat, a taut metallic sky
Is looped above the siding, drably scarred
With rails that flank a sooty engine-yard,
Ash-heaps and sheds and roofing all awry.

Derelict mouse-grey trucks are mirrored by
The sepia of a mute canal, where charred
Gasometers squat sullenly on guard,
And barges drowse and boilers faintly sigh.

To-night the arc-lamps, poised from slender stems,
Will bloom like silvery fruits. Signals will gleam
With shifting specks of jade and crimson gems.

Then music: hiss and gasp of throttled steam,
Staccato gamut of the shunted trains,
And murmurous diapason of the cranes.

THE GOLDEN MIRAGE.

(*Translated from the Russian by H. C. Stevens.*)

PAST the window of the coupé flowed the undulating plain, fled copses and thickets—those farther away, slowly; the nearer ones in a wild chase. My companion sat with hands interlocked. His cheeks were covered with carbuncles.

My companion had grey goggle-eyes. They blinked when he smoked a cigarette, the eyelids half closed over them when he gazed out at the swells and thickets. He seemed to have grown tired through his eyes having seen so much, and in such variety.

About an hour before we were to cross the frontier—Siebiezh—he fixed his gaze on the trunk lying on the rack, all covered with baggage labels, and began to speak in a soft, colourless tone.

* * *

. . . I wandered in the South through the cold, empty, insignificant towns, in cafés with broken windows, where the last remnants of the Empire were being sold and bought. I wrote for newspapers. At night I played cards. I drank not overmuch, and didn't inhale cocaine. Also I learnt thoroughly how to guess the day for evacuation by the firing in the streets at night, by the tone of the military proclamations, by the death-agony gaiety of the dram-shops. I took to my heels betimes.

I was neither red nor white. I got fed up with it all. I bundled myself into the hold of a filthy steamer crammed with madmen, and left for Europe. It's no matter where I wandered, how I managed to live. No matter! I had a rotten time. Perhaps I even stole. It was all meaningless, corrupt . . . Fifteen million corpses lay on the fields of Europe, infectious with their stench.

Towards the end, I calmly, with curiosity even, began to await the hour when loathing for myself should overcome the habit of drinking, eating, smoking, winning money and so on. . . .

I remember—the 11th May—in the morning I began as usual to shave and—I flung the razor into the wash-basin. My

hour had struck and I had nothing left to wish for. I went out into the street and sold my watch and ring in a jeweller's shop—all I had with me. Then I sat in the street beneath a small laurel bush, drank up my coffee, and asked the waiter for a batch of humorous journals. Before beginning to read I swiftly resolved : I would end it to-day, at dawn on the Pont des Invalides. It was the first time for several years that the coffee was so delicious and the journals so amusing. I distracted myself as best I could all day. In the evening I went to game in a club on the Rue Lafayette . . .

* * *

I left the club at four o'clock in the morning. I had been in a winning mood—forty-seven thousand francs. Within I was all shivering as if it were winter. The morning was warm, humid. I felt the thick wad of money in my pocket—it was a kind of new possibility. It altered my decision to go and drown myself from the Pont des Invalides.

I stopped near the great window of a trans-Atlantic company, where a blue and green relief map with forests and mountains was displayed. From continent to continent stretched crimson threads. Along them went little steamers the size of match-boxes. In these glittered little windows of tin-foil. I stood and gazed, all icy with agitation . . .

* * *

On May 15th I boarded the *Aquitania* at Havre. For six days I lay in a deck-chair on the upper-deck, in the midst of palms and rose-bushes stirred by the sea-breeze. On the 22nd I stepped off the steamer on to the quay of New York. My heart beat incessantly, ecstatically : a new world, a new life. Russia and Europe, war and revolution, were a book read to its close.

At the entrance to the hotel my trunks were seized by a negro in a light blue jacket. From the mirror-lined elevator grinned, like piano-keys, the teeth of another negro, who was dressed in a light raspberry jacket. On the twelfth floor I passed into a room decorated in varnish and silk-stuffs. I was lost in a Morocco-leather chair and began to smoke a greenish, damp havana cigar.

I sat and repeated to myself : " You are in the mathematical centre of the cult of individualism, the devil strike you." At the raising of the little finger the doors open wide, negroes

with four rows of buttons on their coats momentarily fulfil all the desires in the legend of Scheherazade. There are three telephones—I can be connected with stores, with restaurants, the Stock Exchange, with any town I wish. I can give the order: "Buy me the Pacific Railway." In thirty seconds the broker answers: "Done!"

I bit my nails. The legend of the earth's creation was obviously invented in poverty-stricken Europe by miserable shepherds. Here in a Morocco-leather chair, a man has a million times the possibilities of Jehovah himself.

Having bitten my nails thoroughly, I went down to the hairdresser's. They wrapped me in an odoriferous gown, they immersed my face in a steam bath, they laid hot towels on my cheeks. I was perfumed, my hair combed, then—they offered me ice with peaches, then—they shaved me.

I went to breakfast in a columned hall so large that a small provincial town, fire-brigade tower and all, could have been located within it.

What flowers I saw there, what carpets, mirrors! What women were having breakfast in the hall! Women of a monstrous beauty, great eyes set wide apart, tiny mouths, china-like, placid little faces. . . . Such a fantasy you do not see even in the delirium of typhus. Where could I intrude here with my francs. . . .

After breakfast I sat in the hall by the chimney corner, smoking a black cigar. It goes without saying that I was thinking I would have one hundred million dollars, no matter what it cost me. All that was necessary was the desire, desire, and still desire. I would gain that sumptuous heap of dollars. . . . I would spend them all on myself, to the last cent. . . . Too long had my personality been bottled up. . . . I wished finally, the devil take everybody—to become a personality with a great letter written in gold. Every little hair on my head would be sacred. . . . The most precious,—I. The adored of all the beauties of the day,—I. My words, my cigar-end, the parings of my nails, the spittle from my mouth—venerated. . . . In vain, gentlemen, did you force me to wallow six weeks on the Constantinople pavement before the former Russian embassy. . . . To the devil with Europe, war and revolution. . . . My Fatherland—this (by the fire) leather chair. . . . A full stomach, the smoke of a cigar, the rapture of absolute freedom.

Opposite me, in a chair, sat a sour-looking, bony man, evidently a sufferer from indigestion in the stomach. After some observation of me he said :—

" It is now seventeen minutes that you have been talking aloud. I note first that you are a Russian, secondly that you intend to go in for the Stock Exchange game. My name is Cider. I can make you a substantial proposal. You will do well if you have confidence in me, but I will provide guarantees. Do you wish to see Jimmy Morgan ? . . .

. . . Our conversation by the fire lasted two hours forty minutes. I understood that one must play for a fall,—only for a fall : in this was an historical, a social, even a geological truth. " The earth itself plays for a fall," said Cider with a sour face, " here is an earthquake and there an earthquake, here a drought, there a hurricane. . . . You listen to me,—even the climate plays for a fall : when cold is wanted it's warm, and when warmth is wanted it's cold. . . . "

Next morning I carried all my money to the bank, and Cider and I went to have a look at Jimmy Morgan. At the granite entrance to the bank stood about fifty men of importance on the exchange. They were gloomily or contemptuously silent, or barked shortly through their teeth. Every one of them had a protruding granite chin. Cider stuck out his chin also, and turned still more sour. At twelve o'clock exactly a monstrous automobile appeared from round a corner. Inside it a lanky man with a crooked nose and a narrow, sleepy face was sitting, his hat pulled down over his eyes. . . . It was Jimmy Morgan.

All the fifty exchange magnates began to gaze piercingly at Jimmy Morgan's cigar,—in which corner of the mouth was it. (If in the left, Jimmy was playing for a fall,—if in the right, Jimmy was playing for a rise.) The cigar was in the left corner. Cider whispered to me : " In the left, as I live." . . . The automobile stopped. Jimmy threw open the door and tossed the cigar into the right corner. The exchange magnates began to growl, knocked clean off their legs. But they all pressed closely around the automobile and raised their hats obsequiously. Jimmy put his fingers to his hat, roared something across the cigar, and passed through the granite entrance . . .

* * *

On Cider's advice for June I sold " Petroleum South Texas," in which company of course I had no shares. I had an exalted

confidence that towards June there would be either an earthquake, or all the petroleum bores would catch fire and I should put the difference into my pocket. In June in Texas everything was more prosperous than ever before, and the difference was pocketed by Cider. Then I played for " bears " in Australian cotton, and again the difference was pocketed by Cider. On the 18th July, at two hours seven minutes in the afternoon, I bashed his sour phiz until the blood came at the entrance to the hotel, and left the latter place for ever, leaving my trunks in my room. . . .

* * *

Now it no longer entered my head to, for example, fling myself over Brooklyn bridge into the bay. I began to grow a granite chin. I still had a raging belief in the right of my personality to one hundred million dollars.

For six weeks I cleaned boots in the streets, sold newspapers, stood in a striped frock coat at the entrance to cinemas and pointed with a golden cane at fiery skysigns, and so on. . . . It's tedious to relate. I waited for luck, wrote letters, ran to various addresses. Finally my luck changed. As I was cleaning someone's boots I raised my head and the owner of the boots proved to be an old acquaintance : he kept an office and dabbled in trade with Moscow.

That day I jumped from the pavement to the twenty-eighth floor of a sky-scraper into an office—of two rooms—" Export-import, Harry Sparrow and Company." I sat down behind an oak counter-desk, opened a book of incomings and outgoings, and packed my absolutely free personality into twenty-seven dollars a week. All the rest of me proved to be outside quotation on the market,—of no value to an " Export Company." . . .

* * *

Six days of the week went like this. At half-past seven in the morning I shudderingly seize the rattling alarm clock and for not more than a minute sit with staring eyes. Dressing, shave, a cup of chocolate, ten minutes. Elevator down, one hundred and twenty-two paces to the tube, elevator into the earth ; seven stations under the earth, two elevators up to the street, one hundred and four paces through the street and square, then an elevator-express to the thirtieth floor, then two flights down by the stairs on foot,—for all this, seventeen minutes. Exactly at eight I sit down at the desk, and blow my nose.

Until one o'clock I write, cut with scissors, paste things in. My boss, Sparrow (there's no Harry at all anywhere) reads a tape as it flows out of a telegraphic machine. Of export and import, of course, we have none either (if you ignore a box of guttapercha dickies and collars for Russian peasants). Sparrow, putting one foot on a chair, stands at the telegraphic apparatus and twists a button on his waistcoat. I answer the letters. All the other activity of the office is a secret for me.

At one o'clock I tear myself off the office chair and—into the elevator, down,—along the street into a restaurant. It always seems to Sparrow that if he turns his back he will inevitably let slip some fortunate deal in papers,—he remains in the office at the apparatus, eats sandwiches, and draws out the tape.

In the restaurant—a long, tiled corridor—passing to and fro I seize a control card and a tray. I run to the counter—on it several hundred kinds of food are smoking on plates. I point to the nearest. The cook hurls them on to my tray. A vivacious young woman dexterously stamps my card. I run with the dishes to a vacant table. A waiter violently places before me a decanter of ice-water, bread, and a pat of butter. I eat. I pack fish, beef, sauce, puddings, into my stomach.

Along the tiled walls five hundred office workers, labourers, chauffeurs, etc., are doing the same as I. For the whole meal fifteen minutes. I leap up. I pay according to the card. Exactly at two o'clock I am sitting behind the desk. Sparrow continues to read the little columns of ciphers on the telegraph tape. All his waistcoat is spattered with crumbs, on his lips is clotted cigar juice.

So till six continues the maximum utilisation of the labour day, not a second is lost. Usually Sparrow manages to tear several ciphers from the tape and to sell or buy them over the telephone, and—receives the difference : fifty, a hundred dollars. The day is ended.

At six I slam to the book, put on my jacket, wish Sparrow " good evening," and ride home. The wheels rattle and rumble in my head. My mouth is parched. All my veins vibrate beneath my skin. At half-past six I take a hot bath, shave, put on a silk shirt (I am no boor), a smoking jacket, and go out into the street to enjoy life.

I am absolutely free. I dine—more slowly than in the day.

I smoke a cigar. I consider where I shall go. Little by little I begin to realise that despite the silk shirt and smoking jacket, no-one is waiting for me this evening, no-one has sent me an invitation, not to one person of all these five millions am I necessary. I go to a cinema.

On the cinema screen there is still more futility than in life, but then it is noiseless, and that is to the good. During the interval I eat ice. I smoke. Then,—I go home through the streets, full of personalities such as I in smoking jackets. I jostle, am deafened by the noise and crash, I am stifled with human perspiration and the odour of petrol, I am blinded with fiery skysigns, flaming on the roofs and clouds.

At twelve I am at home. I lie and smoke juicy cigarettes. Sleep will not come. My heart knocks like the engine of a motor-cycle. I smoke in order to stupefy myself. My brain is quite withered up. It is all monstrously senseless. . . .

* * *

Sparrow determined to sell electric bulbs for pocket lamps to Soviet Russia and sent me to the factory for the trash.

I was travelling alone in the compartment. I gazed out of the window. It was a windy spring day. I had a feeling of impending trouble. Someone entered the compartment, sat down opposite, there was the click of a catch. Then a ray of sunlight reflected from a pocket mirror slipped over my face. I glanced around. Before me sat a young woman of marvellous beauty, like those I had seen on the first day of my arrival. A childish, pre-occupied little face, fair hair, negligently brushed back, and blue eyes wide apart.

I took no precautions. I began to gaze into those eyes, blue like a wind-driven heaven.

What previous self-confidence there had been,—the idea did not even occur to me of talking with the girl. . . . I gazed in her eyes, like an emaciated bird from a cellar at a spring-day. . . . I assure you,—on such a day, such eyes in a woman seem like the homeland. You gaze and feel that you are a wanderer, wandered homeless,—it's time to return home. I was agitated, troubled, unhappy.

At the next stop the girl got out. I shuddered, so resentfully did she glance back at me. . . . A minute later she returned with a policeman, pointed to me with a lace parasol and said :—

" That gentleman has been planning to dishonour me. I am prepared to give evidence."

They hauled me off to the police-station. They made out a charge-sheet on the basis of the evidence of the blue-eyed beauty. According to the laws of America that was sufficient. They hauled me off to prison. Twenty-four hours later I was taken before the court. I candidly told all the story. The beautiful creature was fearfully astonished,—she was not really a bad sort of girl, and besides, evidently she was flattered by my remarks about her eyes. She declined to prosecute. I paid the fine and returned to New York without the bulbs. . . .

* * *

Sparrow gave me the sack : on the Saturday I received my usual cheque for twenty-seven dollars and a little note,—" Thank you." I found myself once more on the street. But I had no desire now to make one hundred million dollars. Not for that had my mother borne me—in order that I with my last strength should assist Sparrow to pocket the difference. No more did I desire of all this senselessness, it was not in my line. The consolidation of personality ? . . . a delusion, charlatanry. . . . Mirage. I am not insane. Back, home to the fatherland. . .

* * *

At Siebiezh our train passed slowly under the wooden archway into Russia. On the undulating plain, by the embankment, stood a tall red army soldier, in a helmet, with a rifle slung over his shoulder, and gazed placidly at the windows of the carriages. The wind blew back the edge of his greatcoat, which had seen better days.

Behind him,—hills, forests, plain, for many thousands of miles. In serried ranks, unhasting, the grey clouds slipped past.

EUROPEAN ANTHOLOGY

III.

GEORG TRAKL.

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON.

M. J. LERMONTOV.

ADAM MICKIEWICZ.

ANTONIN SOVA.

GEORG TRAKL.

DECAY

(*From the German*).

AT evening, when the chimes intone the reign
Of peace, the wondrous flight of birds I scan.
Like pious pilgrims in a long-drawn span
Amid far zones, autumnal clear, they wane.

As through the twilit garden-close I pace,
Dreaming whither their brighter hazards speed,
The hour-hand's forward stir I scarcely heed.
Thus over clouds their journeyings I trace.

A waft then sets me trembling at decay.
In leafless boughs the ousel's plaints resound.
On rusty trellises red vine-leaves sway.

While like pale children in a ghostly round
By weather-beaten mill-wheels, in blue array
Wind-shaken asters bend them to the ground.

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON.

CHOICE

(*From the Norwegian*).

FOR April be my praise,
Wherein the old is falling;
Wherein the new gains power;
What though its wont be brawling?—
Not peace is highest dower,
But what the will essays.

For April be my praise,
Because it storms and blusters,
Because with mirth it surges,
Because of wealth it musters,
Because of strength it urges
Unto the summer-days.

M. J. LERMONTOV.

AND DROOPING AND GRIEVING . . .

(*From the Russian*).

AND drooping and grieving, and nowhere the hand of a friend
When the spirit is haplessly pining . . .
Desire? And what boots a desire that is vain, without end?
While the years,—all the goodliest years are declining.
And love? . . . But of whom? What avails it to love for a space?
And never a love but must languish.
Yourself would you probe? Of the past there is never a trace:
And paltry is all, be it gladness or anguish . . .
What of passion? Or sooner or later its blissful dismays
Will vanish when reason has spoken:
And life, as you view it around you with coldness of gaze,—
A jest that has folly and irk as its token.

(1840).

ADAM MICKIEWICZ.

THE SEAFARING

(*From the Polish*).

A DEEPENING roar, in closer throngs the sea-sprites fare,
The mariner has scaled the rigging,—lads, stand by,—
He has sped and strained and clung in an unseen net on high,
Like to a spider that lurks amid its beckoning lair.

Wind, wind! The vessel sulks, no bridle will it bear.
It tosses and it dips where foamy blizzards fly.
It lifts its neck, tramples the waves and soars the sky.
Its forehead cleaves the clouds, it grips the wings of the air.

My spirit sways as the mast ranges the sea's unrest,
Like these dishevelled sails, phantasy waxes large,
Amid the gleeful crew my unprompted shout is heard.

I upraise my arms and sink upon the vessel's breast.
Methinks my bosom urges on its headlong charge.
Buoyant, alert and blithe, I know the mood of a bird.

ANTONIN SOVA.

NEVER SO EERILY YET . . .

(*From the Czech*).

NEVER so eerily yet
Soughed my native wood :
I should weep, I should weep
If I but could.

There is mockery in the twilight
Beneath each heavy bough.
The evening seems to drag its broken wings
Over the earth now.

And what is that laughter in the leafage,
And what is that dry chuckling sound ?
With seven-league strides, O my soul,
Whither are you bound ?

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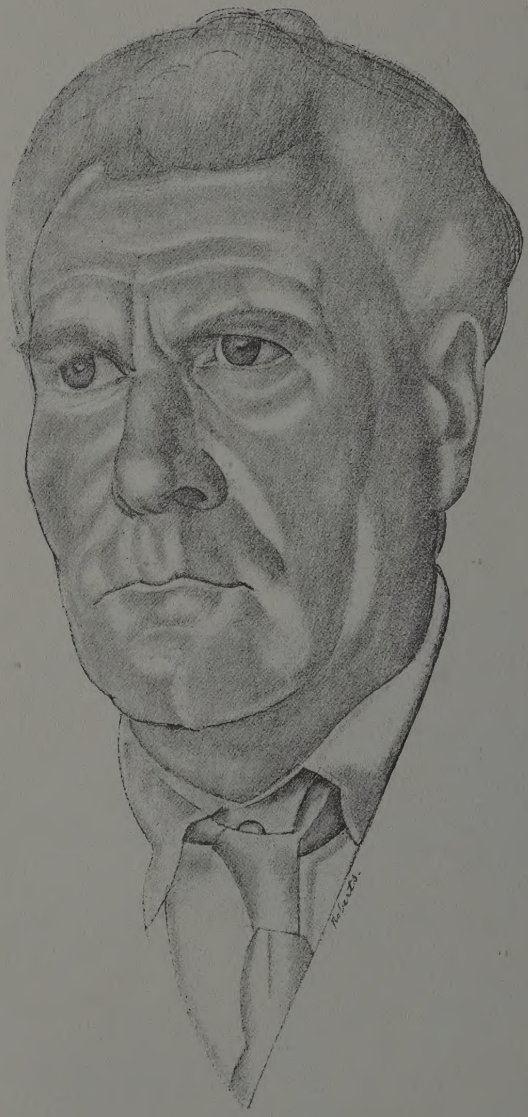

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